CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 3 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Norberg (Sweden)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 782nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I should like to extend on behalf of the Conference, and on my own behalf, a warm welcome to our distinguished visitor today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, the Honourable Alexander Downer, who will be our first speaker. His presence among us again today testifies to the continued importance attached by his Government to our Conference.

Besides the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Austria, Finland and the Russian Federation.

I should like to remind you that we will hold informal open-ended consultations on agenda item 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", immediately after this plenary meeting, and on agenda item 4, "Negative security assurances", in the afternoon beginning at 3.30 p.m., in this room.

I now have pleasure inviting the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, the Honourable Alexander Downer, to make his statement.

Mr. DOWNER (Australia): I am very pleased to have this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament.

The fact that this is my second visit in as many years is testimony to the importance my country accords this institution and the contribution it has made to building a more secure world.

In a very real and concrete sense, your task is the biblical one of beating swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks.

This is a noble and important mission, particularly in this period of uncertainty and rapid change. It is vital that we continue to seize the opportunities currently available to put in place the arms control and disarmament norms on which a stable security environment for the twenty-first century can be built.

I would like today to present an Australian perspective on the way ahead.

I pay tribute to you, Ambassador Norberg, and through you, your country, Sweden. Sweden and Australia share many common principles and perspectives in the field of disarmament, and we have worked in productive partnership on many occasions.

The CD is facing a difficult and challenging year, and it is fortunate that someone of your experience and diplomatic skill should be in a position to guide it at the outset.

In my address to you last year, I said that the Conference on Disarmament was at a crossroads.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

A year later, a wasted year in many respects, an outside observer might be forgiven for thinking that the CD had pitched its tent at the crossroads, unpacked its bags, and begun to get comfortable.

This is not to denigrate the importance of ideological and philosophical debate in underpinning the practical disarmament work this Conference was established to do.

After two major achievements in quick succession, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, "Whither the CD?" is a valid question for debate.

It is just that the debate, or at least the terms in which the question is posed, has become rather closed and repetitive.

The key to unlocking it is clearly the question of nuclear disarmament.

I can understand and support the sentiments of those who want faster progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Australia is as committed as any in this room to the twin, linked goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation enshrined in article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The sooner the Nuclear-Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) achieves universal adherence and full implementation, the safer the world will be.

But it is necessary to ask ourselves - and more particularly, yourselves, distinguished delegates to the Conference on Disarmament - what practical, realistic contribution each of us can make to bringing this state of affairs about.

The START process has, when measured against the complexity of the task and the titanic scale of cold war nuclear arsenals, achieved substantial, real nuclear arms reductions in a very short time.

I very much look forward to Russia's speedy ratification of START II and a formal beginning to negotiations on START III which will further reduce the strategic nuclear warhead stockpiles of both the United States and Russia to some 80 per cent below cold war peaks.

Would it help, as some appear to be proposing, to bring the START process into this chamber and subject it to preordained timetables and negotiation by 60 countries instead of 2?

Would that accelerate the business of getting rid of actual nuclear weapons?

I would guess that even the most ardent supporters of this institution, among whom I am happy to count myself, would concede that it would not.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

That was also the conclusion of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, whose report I had the honour to present to you last year, a report which, I am pleased to note, continues to be drawn on in the debate on the way forward on nuclear disarmament.

This is not to say, of course, that this Conference and the great majority of the community of nations are to be for ever excluded from a process of vital concern to their security.

The post-START-III nuclear landscape will open up a range of exciting prospects in which the CD and nations outside the five declared nuclear-weapon States, particularly those operating currently unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, will have a vital role to play in drawing down to a nuclear-weapon-free world, and constructing a verification regime so that we can all be assured it stays that way.

It is, moreover, in this vital area of verification that the CD, with its expertise born of negotiating the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and other instruments, will come consummately into its own.

Nor must we conclude that there is nothing the CD can contribute immediately to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The Canberra Commission, in addition to proposing a number of practical steps to the nuclear-weapon States, also identified as a "reinforcing step ... for immediate action" the cessation of the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive purposes, in other words, a "cut-off" treaty, a mandate for which has lain unactioned before you since 1995.

Why is a cut-off treaty worth pursuing at this time?

From our national point of view, Australia long ago decided that our security interests would be best served by not acquiring nuclear weapons.

We made a commitment to this effect through the NPT, and joined similarly minded States in a system of mutual security assurances confirming that they would not seek recourse to nuclear weapons as instruments of political or military policy.

We reached our position on the basis of a hard-headed, pragmatic assessment of our national security interests.

That is, the more nations that possess nuclear weapons, the greater the chance that a future conflict could lead to their use.

If nuclear weapons were to proliferate in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia's strategic environment would be fundamentally altered for the worse.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

As things stand, however, our region benefits enormously from the fact that all regional countries have recognized the obvious value of NPT adherence as a means of permanently preventing nuclear proliferation.

A similar pragmatic assessment of our national security interests has led us to the conclusion that a fissile material cut-off treaty is very much in our interest - indeed, in the interest of every country.

Let me set out for you why I believe Australian interests would be served by a fissile material cut-off treaty; but let me emphasize, too, that these arguments suggest compelling reasons why cut-off would likewise advance the interests not only of other non-nuclear-weapon States like ourselves, but of all States, including nuclear-weapon States and those States which, in their current security environment, are unwilling to make a commitment to foreclose the option of acquiring nuclear weapons.

A fissile material cut-off treaty would give us all greater security by putting a further nail in the coffin of the nuclear arms race and the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Just as the CTBT is creating a barrier to the qualitative development of nuclear weapons, cut-off will create a barrier to their quantitative development.

It would contribute to the creation of an environment - in the words of the Canberra Commission - "conducive to the elimination of nuclear weapons".

In stark terms, the process of reducing arsenals can only have meaning if we can be assured that there is no parallel build-up of weapons-usable material.

A cut-off treaty would require the nuclear-weapon States to make good their NPT article VI commitment to pursue negotiations related to the cessation of the nuclear arms race.

Importantly, it would also help the nuclear-weapon States to take further steps towards dismantling their nuclear arsenals by creating greater transparency and confidence about the capabilities as well as the intentions of other countries with fissile material production facilities.

Cut-off would also help to redress the admittedly discriminatory nature of the non-proliferation regime by, for the first time, subjecting nuclear facilities in the nuclear-weapon States to obligatory international verification.

It is worth dwelling on this point: facilities among the most sensitive in the nuclear-weapon States - those producing the nuclear material which is the essential building block for any nuclear weapon - would at last be subject to international scrutiny.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

A universally agreed-to cut-off treaty would be a valuable security and confidence-building measure in regions of tension, such as the Middle East and South Asia, where the security environment is such that some States have not been prepared to join the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Cut-off would help to ease tensions in these regions and reduce the potential for nuclear arms races, thereby contributing to an enhanced global security environment to the benefit of all States.

A universally agreed-to cut-off treaty would, finally, be a central and indispensable element in any verification regime for a world free of nuclear weapons.

We envisage a fissile material cut-off treaty including two basic undertakings: firstly, an agreement not to produce fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or in any way to assist, encourage or induce others to produce such material for use in nuclear weapons: and secondly, an agreement by all parties, including nuclear-weapon States, to accept international safeguards on all existing and any future facilities capable of producing fissile material that could be used in nuclear weapons.

In effect, this would mean that parties to the treaty would submit to safeguards inspections all enrichment facilities and reprocessing facilities.

Parties to the treaty would commit themselves, within a short period of time after the entry into force of the treaty, to making a declaration listing all the facilities within their jurisdiction capable of producing enriched uranium or separated plutonium.

A system of routine and non-routine inspections would then be established under IAEA to verify these initial declarations and to provide subsequent assurances that these facilities were not being used for purposes proscribed by the treaty.

Obviously, there are a number of difficult technical issues which will need to be addressed in the cut-off negotiations.

These include the exact nature and scope of the verification regime, the method of paying for that regime, and the entry-into-force requirements.

However, the CD has shown in the past that where there is political will, solutions can be found to the most difficult problems, and I have no doubt that all these questions will be resolved.

In a perfect world, it would be desirable to negotiate a single treaty which addressed both future production of fissile material, as well as existing stockpiles.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

But, pragmatically, we should recognize that we can only go one step at a time and that we should not make the perfect the enemy of the good.

While a multilateral and effectively verifiable agreement to cease future production of fissile material may be possible now, it is our strong view that the cut-off treaty should not try comprehensively to address existing stocks.

One reason for this is that countries which have produced, or are producing, fissile material for explosive purposes, including those countries which continue to stand outside existing international arrangements, do not currently see it in their security interests to take the additional step of offering greater transparency of their existing stocks of fissile materials.

This is a reality, however much we may wish it to be otherwise, and a genuine commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation demands that we accommodate this reality in order to make the progress which is realistically possible.

However, once we have all agreed to a cut-off treaty, it is difficult to envisage further significant progress towards nuclear disarmament which does not include, sooner or later, multilateral verification of both fissile material production facilities and fissile material stockpiles.

It is a simple fact that once there is a universal ban on production, we will all want to be confident that ongoing reductions in nuclear arsenals will be permanent.

Australia therefore believes that in taking this first step in constructing, in the words of the mandate you agreed in 1995, a "non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons", we will need to do so in the knowledge that it presupposes a following step which would bring existing stocks under strict and effective international control.

All of us in this place should recognize that a cut-off treaty is an essential step towards nuclear disarmament, and that it is an objective which is worth pursuing in its own right.

Once a cut-off treaty has been achieved, we will be able to consider the next steps towards nuclear disarmament.

Cut-off is achievable in the short term; the only obstacle is that some of us do not, perhaps, recognize its value and do not want it enough to look beyond shorter-term interests.

History tells us that opportunities such as the one which this Conference has before it do not last for ever, and are never served up a second time.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

We could not have predicted the changes which have taken place in the world over the last 10 years, nor can we predict the future.

None of us should assume that the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty will continue indefinitely to attract the support of all nuclear-weapon States.

The CD should not allow the proposal to be used as a bargaining chip or, worse still, to be held hostage by States which have managed to avoid making any multilateral commitments to eschew nuclear weapons.

That would be a gamble, and a serious mistake.

The chip, if that is what it has become, needs to be cashed in now, urgently, while it still has currency.

That possibility and the will to proceed exist now, and we should take full advantage of this fact while we can.

I call on the CD to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without any further delay.

I should now like to turn to another pressing arms control issue, this time in the area of conventional arms - anti-personnel landmines (APLs).

I am aware that there are those who challenge the competence of the CD to deal with conventional arms as distinct from weapons of mass destruction.

But I find no basis for this challenge in the documents which inspire your work.

Both the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament and your own guiding "Decalogue" of issues, while according priority to nuclear disarmament, also clearly mandate the CD to address conventional disarmament.

Australia is committed to the achievement of a comprehensive and lasting solution to the global landmines crisis.

The recent signing of the Ottawa landmines ban treaty by more than 120 countries gives us cause for hope.

By signing the treaty, Australia and a significant proportion of the international community have entered into a legally binding commitment forswearing the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

This is an achievement of major international significance.

The Ottawa treaty is not, however, the end of the battle.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

While the campaign to achieve greater adherence to the Ottawa treaty is important, it is clear that several of the major traditional producers and users of landmines are not in a position, at this stage at least, to sign the treaty.

The conclusions we draw from this are simple:

Those countries should not become alienated from a cause which has mobilized the energies and commitment of many governments and peoples worldwide.

The momentum of the pro-ban movement should not be dissipated with the job only part-done.

The CD should reaffirm its relevance to the contemporary arms control agenda by engaging those outside the Ottawa treaty on the landmines issue.

In so doing, the CD will be contributing to a lasting solution to the global landmines problem for the long term.

That the CD has a job to do here and that the world expects it to do it is clear. The overwhelming support given to the resolution in favour of further action on landmines in the CD, adopted without any negative votes at the most recent United Nations General Assembly, is a clear indication of the will of the international community on this point.

For its part, Australia's continued interest in seeing the CD work on landmines issues is an open and honest attempt to complement the Ottawa treaty and address remaining elements of the global landmines problem at their source.

Australia's aim is to see a CD ad hoc committee established as soon as possible this year with a clear mandate to negotiate one aspect of a landmines ban.

After extensive consultations, we judge that agreement should be possible to negotiate a ban on transfers of landmines.

A ban on transfers of APLs which included major traditional producers of landmines not parties to the Ottawa treaty, would add considerably to a global solution to a global problem.

It would be consistent with and complementary to the Ottawa treaty by creating a space to allow Ottawa treaty non-signatories to make their own contribution to solving the landmines problem.

By attracting the support of important victim countries and past user States, the Ottawa treaty has achieved a great deal.

As we know, however, a good proportion of the landmines currently in the ground, those being laid now and those which notwithstanding our best efforts, will be laid in the future, are the results of the actions of non-State entities.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

It is crucial, therefore, that we attack both the supply and the demand sides of this conundrum - where we cannot persuade political groups to forsake use of APLs, we can take measures to diminish the international supply of these weapons.

This is precisely what a transfers ban would do.

It is of course true that a ban on APL transfers, whether in the form of the Ottawa treaty or embodied in a stand-alone instrument, is not going to remove the problem of indigenous production of landmines, nor is it going to block completely terrorist and other groups determined to use landmines.

But this is not an argument against negotiating such a ban. Possession of landmines being so widespread, partial measures by those not willing to abandon them completely, such as a ban on transfers, are still worth having and worth working for as a step towards total elimination.

In this, as in the case of a cut-off treaty, as in all fields of arms control, we should not disdain partial measures, but seize on them, cement them in, use them as building blocks towards a better and a safer world.

A global ban on landmines transfers negotiated in the CD would pass the most fundamental test of all for what the world has sent you here to do. It would save lives.

I am aware that a range of other issues, in addition to cut-off and landmines, have been proposed for CD negotiation or consideration in the coming year.

In all, in your search for ways to break through the impasse which paralysed this institution 1997, you have some 9 or 10 issues to choose from, if questions relating to institutional reform are included.

Some of these issues seem to me to be not yet ripe for international negotiations. Others are being dealt with, and may be better dealt with, elsewhere.

And while institutional reform and renewal is always important, it is clearly not, of itself, an issue which will restore international confidence in the relevance and viability of the CD.

I began this address with a reference to the biblical passage which enjoins us to beat our swords into ploughshares.

Regrettably, not even in antiquity could all the world's swords be converted to peaceful uses at once.

Similarly, now. The CD has an important, finite capacity to fashion arms control agreements which is lying idle.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

In the interests of your own credibility, as well as the security of future generations, I urge you to put that capacity to work now on the two swords which are currently most apt for beating: cut-off and landmines.

I should like to conclude by briefly surveying a more productive corner of the Geneva landscape.

We should not forget that, while this forum has been unable to agree on a forward work programme, an important arms control treaty is under negotiation.

That is a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

A legal norm prohibiting the development, production and stockpiling of biological weapons has been in place for some 25 years.

Yet we know, not least from the exhaustive inspections carried out by UNSCOM in Iraq, that this has not prevented some countries from developing biological weapons programmes.

This knowledge should motivate all of us to work assiduously to establish an effective verification regime for the BWC.

To date, progress in the negotiations has been slow.

However, the move last year to a rolling text was a major positive development and one that should lead to an intensification of the negotiations.

I would encourage all the participants in these negotiations, many of whom are represented here, to demonstrate a commitment to putting in place a stringent verification regime that will ensure that the world is free from the threat of biological warfare.

It should not prove beyond our collective capabilities, particularly as many of the issues with which we are grappling were thoroughly dealt with in the CD negotiations that produced the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are, finally, approaching the first anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In that time, steady and significant progress has been made in putting the Convention into effective operation.

But there are no grounds for complacency, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons must continue its efforts to ensure the implementation of all Convention obligations, particularly those which constitute the verification machinery.

(Mr. Downer, Australia)

For instance, it is imperative, for the credibility of the Convention, that State parties submit full and complete declarations.

Additionally, while the first nine months of the Convention's life have seen an impressive increase in ratifications and accessions, adherence is far from universal.

I urge those countries which have not yet done so to ratify the Convention as soon as possible.

I wish the Conference on Disarmament a productive year ahead in 1998.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Austria, Ambassador Kreid, to take the floor.

Mr. KREID (Austria): Like others, we come to this session of the Conference on Disarmament with an open mind and with a willingness to take a fresh look at the not too fresh items of our agenda. Like others, we are keenly aware of that fact that not all items can be approached in the same manner. They are not comparable in scope or stake. Some need careful and lengthy preparation, others appear suitable to become the subject of early negotiations.

For whole year we have racked our brains and turned around the issues in order to discover some common ground, some hidden angle of concord which would allow us to fill this venerable hall with new vigour and activity. We have failed but we need to keep trying.

It is now becoming quite fashionable to say this is the best club in town. Perhaps. I am ignorant of the amenities of other clubs because this one, in spite of its inactivity, keeps me quite busy. At any rate, it is a highly professional club, full of dedicated people who are aware of their responsibilities and of the expectations of the outside world. This is good. It makes for inventiveness and creative thinking. We are in need of it because a club or, for that matter, any group of people, needs common values and common goals, otherwise it is liable to disintegrate. Are we going to allow this?

Austria's commitment to nuclear disarmament is well known. For Austria it is beyond any doubt that the CD should render its contribution to this crucial issue. While we all agree that nuclear disarmament is a primary and priority preoccupation of the world community, there exist profound divisions in this body on the role the CD should play in this context. These divisions have stymied any progress here in Geneva last year. We cannot afford to reiterate last year's failure. We need to build consensus and I think we can do it.

There is one area, namely the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), which offers good prospects of success. To disdain the chance of achieving a contractual agreement in an area of vital interest to all of us appears

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

unreasonable. More so, it is irresponsible. Advances in international control regimes for fissile material are not to be lightly dismissed. The threat which the large quantities of highly enriched uranium and plutonium pose need not be stressed. A multilateral negotiation of these issues will advance the cause of a non-nuclear culture and bring us closer to our ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world. We thus call for the immediate re-establishment of an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations on an FMCT based on the 1995 Shannon report (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein. A draft decision, which we ask the secretariat to circulate as an official CD document, is attached to this statement. In this context we recommend that the Canadian working paper submitted to the CD on 21 January be taken into consideration.

There are many countries represented here which believe that an FMCT alone is not sufficient. Austria is among them. We would like to see the CD open itself up to a more comprehensive approach. We believe that there is scope for a more systematic and thoroughgoing manner to deal with nuclear disarmament in the CD. The primary responsibility in the field of nuclear disarmament remains with the nuclear-weapons States. We appeal to them to pursue their efforts and we encourage them to push on with unilateral, bilateral and plurilateral reduction measures. Yet, we believe there is room for a multilateral forum to keep the nuclear issues under review and to prepare the ground for further clearly circumscribed areas of multilateral negotiation.

We trust that the nuclear-weapons States understand the concerns of the rest of the world. We trust that their governments are pondering the transformations which have taken place on the geopolitical scene and that they are drawing their conclusions as to the security interests of the present and coming generations. We trust that the nuclear-weapons States will not refuse to embark on a common course with the rest of the world. The way this Conference works - and here I fully share the view expressed by my Canadian colleague - provides ample guarantees that our proceedings will enjoy consensus support. Dealing with nuclear issues at this Conference as a shared but differentiated responsibility could bear fruit in the years to come.

This is why we welcome the South African proposal. It is inspired by an earnest attempt at striking a balance between opposing views. We consider it a promising sign that support has been coming from member States belonging to various groups. To get entrenched in group positions needs to be avoided if we want to preserve an adequate margin of manoeuvre. We also believe that the Belgian statement of 22 January constitutes an important contribution, since it departs from a rigorous analysis of the factual situation.

We are, of course, aware that such proposals do not meet the expectations of everybody but we are firmly convinced that they offer the best chance to proceed to substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament issues with a view to identifying topics suitable for multilateral negotiation.

There are other issues that require serious consideration. We do not see the CD as a one-issue organization. We also do not approve of the

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

strategy of making this Conference hostage of one single issue. When we establish our work programme we urge delegations to evaluate each item on its proper merits. What then, apart from the nuclear theme, recommends itself to us for being taken up in our work? There is, above all, the area of outer space.

Our interest lies in the prevention of what is generally referred to as an arms race in outer space. There is no such arms race for the time being. But this does not set our mind completely at rest. Recent years have seen technological developments which open up perspectives for new uses of outer space, including military ones. What we need to address is the risk of a militarization or what others call a weaponization of outer space. We should close the door to using or even testing weapons systems in outer space before such programmes have reached a stage where it gets politically difficult to stop them. An examination of the existing legal instruments reveals that there are certain gaps and loopholes that need to be closed if we want to forestall the possibility of a military conflict in or including outer space.

Just as the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 established a forward-looking regime which anticipated certain developments that have in the meantime taken place, we now need to review the situation and bring our legal instruments into line with the advances of military science and technology. Such a move is fully in line with the findings of the Group of Governmental Experts in charge of studying the application of confidence-building measures in outer space, which, in its 1993 report, already came to the conclusion that the rapid progress in space technologies required a continuous review of the need to update and supplement the international regime.

At last year's CD no outspoken opposition was raised against doing work on outer space. We are further encouraged by the fact that the resolution on outer space in the General Assembly was adopted without a negative vote. Austria therefore considers the time ripe to explore ways and means of updating the last CD mandate on prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We agree with those who think that the CD should renew its efforts in the field of conventional arms.

Over the past years we have witnessed the outbreak of devastating conflicts, where the use of conventional weapons has demonstrated the risks emanating from the great concentration of such weapons. A number of approaches for confidence-building, arms control or actual reduction of arms have helped to devise and implement specific measures, particularly at the regional level. But the enormous costs and suffering still caused by such weapons make it imperative for the international community to find an appropriate way for dealing with the issue of conventional weapons.

Against the backdrop of increasingly destructive conflicts tearing societies apart, we need to come to grips with the problems of destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons, illicit arms trafficking and demobilization of warring factions. In these efforts, the recommendations of

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms should be taken into account together with the UNDC guidelines of 1996 and the results of the comprehensive study undertaken by UNIDIR.

Within this overall context the question of small arms needs particular attention. Small arms are readily available and easy to handle and thus are the real killers in the kind of conflicts we are overwhelmingly faced with in today's world. We attach great importance to the analysis and recommendations elaborated by the panel chaired by Japan's Ambassador Donowaki and see the need to carry forward pertinent work not only in a purely deliberative way.

A better control of arms flows through a code of conduct appears of primary significance. Elements of such a future agenda were mentioned by us in our 1995 statement. They included a code of conduct adhered to by exporters and importers, the introduction of a certificate restricting imports to the purpose of legitimate self-defence or peacekeeping while assuring that the arms are going to be used in conformity with international humanitarian laws and the possibility for on-site activities of compliance control.

We should not be afraid of the number of difficult questions which we will have to face when dealing with this issue, particularly of methodology, and we should be prepared to cope with the reluctance and reticence of certain governments to go ahead with more ambitious projects such as have recently been undertaken at a regional level.

We applaud in this context the successful endeavours of OAS on illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in arms and thank the Mexican Ambassador for drawing our attention to them.

The CD should find it feasible to focus also on the question of transparency which, at any rate, is only a modest step for further action. But, as in the other areas, we are in no way inclined to belittle such modest steps if they lead in the right direction and give us something to build on once a more propitious climate prevails.

The Ottawa treaty on APLMs has justly been hailed as the triumph of a good cause. The speed with which it was negotiated and the adherence of so many countries demonstrate the timeliness of this initiative, whose success surpassed the expectations of its most fervent promoters. In the wake of this treaty, we have seen an upsurge in governments' demining activities. Donor countries, including my own, have pledged additional funds to deliver the afflicted regions of the world from this scourge. Yet, it will all amount to little if we cannot prevent future contamination. Therefore, Austria is determined to do whatever it can to attain universal adherence to the Ottawa treaty. We are willing to use every forum, including the CD, to advance this cause. The yardstick, a total ban, has been set and we are not willing to deviate from this objective. Austria will judge any proposal on its merits provided it does not merely serve as an alibi for countries unwilling to budge on the substance of the issue. Needless to say, any work undertaken in the CD cannot be complementary to Ottawa. The Ottawa treaty cannot be complemented since it is already complete and all-encompassing.

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

I do not want to conclude my remarks without having referred to the question of CD reform. It might be an overstatement to say that reform is dear to my heart, but true enough, it gave me pause for a while in my brief tenure as last year's Special Coordinator on expansion. Unfortunately, I then had to conclude - and there is nothing which contradicts these conclusions today - that this Conference is unlikely to move ahead in the area of reform as long as it finds itself in a mood of despondency. I think that the work of your reform Coordinators can only thrive in a climate of confidence and buoyancy. Only if we are propelled by forward-looking concepts, only if we suffer the slings and arrows of day-to-day frustration with the way we handle certain aspects of our work, are we likely to take incisive action in this field.

This is not to say that I consider the task of reform as of little urgency. On the contrary, we need to press ahead with it as vigorously as possible once the Conference is launched on a course of action. This is not a linkage. What leverage could be gained in delaying the nomination of reform Coordinators? It is simply to say that reform should not be attempted in isolation from substantive work for the reasons just mentioned and also because of the signal we would convey to the outside world.

Nobody among us is keen to repeat last year's experience, not even the Special Coordinators. Our experience was unduly short. Although it may not have been the intention of the Conference to bestow upon us such a limited time span of work, standard procedure has it that the CD reinvents it entire subsidiary machinery at each new session. It is worth giving serious consideration to the proposal of the Chilean Ambassador contained in a letter addressed to the President of the Conference on 2 December of last year. In this letter our Chilean colleague suggests that we ought to have standing bodies that survive a session and are given the time required to come to their conclusions. My delegation fully associates itself with this concept and we hope that we can make some headway in this regard, once a coordinator on the functioning of the CD has been appointed.

In conclusion, permit me, Mr. President, to express to you our best wishes for success in your momentous endeavour. Knowing you, I do not hesitate to credit you fully with the virtues required for the challenge you are faced with, namely, patience, perseverance and perspicacity. Armed with these three Ps you will be in a good position to help us in overcoming our current difficulties. There is an additional cause for optimism - namely, the arrival of so many distinguished new colleagues, whom I should like to salute and welcome most cordially in our midst. Their fresh and unprejudiced approach might help us to see certain issues in a different light and suggest new solutions to questions which we have unsuccessfully grappled with in the past.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Austria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is a pleasure for me to see an experienced Nordic colleague in this important post. I wish you success in this most demanding task and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

I would also like to warmly welcome all the new colleagues who have recently joined us in the CD. Your fresh ideas and thinking will be of great value to our work. Let me also express our appreciation for the statement just made to the CD by the Foreign Minister of Australia.

In many previous statements we have heard the wish that the Conference should not this year repeat the deliberations of last year. I believe this is the sincere wish of us all. It is of utmost importance for the credibility of this Conference that it is able to move expeditiously into substantive work where results can be expected.

It is the view of Finland that we should build on the work of last year. We should take as a starting point where we finished in 1997, taking into account the subsequent events with significance to the CD work.

The four Special Coordinators of 1997 did outstanding work in relatively difficult circumstances. The Special Coordinators on anti-personnel landmines, on the CD agenda, on improved and effective functioning and on expansion recommended in their reports, before the closure of last year's session, that the work they had started should be continued.

Now that the Ottawa Convention has been successfully finalized, the question of anti-personnel landmines (APLs) has clearly entered a new phase. This was confirmed also by the United Nations General Assembly, which overwhelmingly supported resolution 52/38 H, inviting the Conference on Disarmament to intensify its efforts on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. We consider this a clear indication that the international community expects the Conference on Disarmament to assume its responsibility in this field.

In our view these developments should enable us to start without delay negotiations on anti-personnel landmines. There seems to be a wide understanding that a ban on transfers of anti-personnel landmines could be the issue that the CD should address first. This is also the view shared by Finland. We support the early establishment of an ad hoc committee to start negotiating a ban on transfers of APLs. If some delegations are not prepared to establish an ad hoc committee immediately, we should reappoint the Special Coordinator. He could complete his task within a very short period of time and present his recommendation for the mandate of an ad hoc committee.

It is also important that the Coordinators for so-called reform issues will be able to continue their work. The agenda of the Conference needs simplification and updating. The agenda should reflect the requirements of the modern world and be understandable. The question of improved and effective functioning of the CD has some new topicality now that the whole United Nations system is reviewing its functioning.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

As we have stated earlier, Finland pays special attention to the further expansion of the membership of the Conference. There are several countries able and willing to contribute to the work of the Conference. Continued work by the Special Coordinator will be needed in this area, too.

All four Special Coordinators of last year, though different in nature, could be reappointed at the same time and given the time they need to be able to present their recommendations. It goes without saying that the appointment of the four Coordinators will not exclude appointment of other special coordinators or ad hoc committees, if agreed upon.

As we have stated earlier, Finland places special importance on starting negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty. We consider cut-off a valuable step forward in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that the CD will be able to establish an ad hoc committee for these negotiations on the basis of the agreed mandate. We appreciate the ideas on this subject elaborated by Canada and today by Austria.

We note with interest that several proposals have been put forward on nuclear disarmament in general terms. Finland, like all the other NPT countries, sees the total elimination of nuclear weapons as the ultimate objective. Finland welcomes the commitment at the Helsinki summit last year by President Clinton and President Yeltsin to continue nuclear disarmament though the START process. At the moment we see the bilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations as the most efficient way to concrete reductions. Last year, in connection with the NPT discussion on nuclear disarmament, Finland called for more transparency in the implementation of the commitments to withdraw from operational use and to eliminate short-range nuclear weapons. In our view, a regular dialogue on nuclear disarmament issues in an international forum such as the CD and the NPT contributes to building further confidence on the progress made.

The United Nations General Assembly has given us indications also of some other issues where the CD could play a role either now or later, such as negative security assurances, prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency in armaments and small arms. These are issues that need appropriate attention in consultations on the CD programme of work. The CD has done some earlier useful work on the first three subjects. The mandates of the former ad hoc committees, as well as the result of their work, could be looked at again to see if they can be used as a basis for further work. We also note with interest the proposal on the transfer of small arms made by Mexico two weeks ago.

In this statement I have listed several items that are possible subjects for further work in the CD. We realize that the CD cannot choose the whole menu at once. We hope, however, that through an intensive consultation process and necessary flexibility we can identify those items where preparatory work or concrete negotiations could be started as early as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Finland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Berdennikov.

Mr. BERDENNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, it is a pleasure for me to welcome you as a distinguished Swedish diplomat to the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to wish you success and express the hope that under your guidance the Conference will be able to adopt important decisions for its future work. I would also like to welcome the new colleagues joining us this year - the Ambassadors of Japan, the Netherlands, Viet Nam, Peru, Sri Lanka, India, the United States of America, Iran and China. I would like to express the wish that, during the time they will be representing their countries at the CD, work will be done which is at least as significant as that which was done by their predecessors.

I cannot fail to note the presence among us earlier today of the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, His Excellency the Honourable Alexander Downer. We are grateful to him for the attention he has shown to our Conference and for the important statement he delivered today, which has given us considerable food for thought.

Many speakers who have preceded me noted that this year we managed to begin the session of the Conference on Disarmament in a smooth and effective manner. The agenda of the Conference was adopted at the opening meeting by consensus, and we would like to pay tribute to you for your able leadership that enabled us to make such a quick start. One cannot but see, however, that on this issue the Conference, like last year, has taken the path of least resistance, adopting an agenda which on the whole does not reflect present-day realities. This view is shared, as we have heard, by many delegations. In our opinion, the language of item 1, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", is obsolete since there is no nuclear arms race any more, but rather a process of active reduction of the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the United States in accordance with agreements between them and unilateral measures - and in a number of important aspects this has been done ahead of schedule. We believe that in the first place the question of the prohibition of the production of fissile material can be addressed under this heading, while a phased ban on anti-personnel mines can be dealt with under item 6, entitled "Comprehensive programme of disarmament".

The Russian delegation supports the earliest possible establishment of an ad hoc committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices with the mandate contained in the report of the Special Coordinator on this issue, as adopted by consensus by the Conference on Disarmament in 1995. Let me remind you that the question of negotiations on an FMCT enjoys broad support in the international community. Thus, in the document on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" adopted by consensus during the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the States parties to the Treaty on the

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on-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - and, as you know, there are more than 180 countries of them - expressed themselves in favour of "the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, in accordance with the statement of the Special Coordinator of the Conference on Disarmament and the mandate contained therein". We consider this agreement to be an important achievement, and it should not be allowed to be undermined.

We are convinced that the time has come for the realization of an FMCT at the multilateral level as the next step to be taken in the pursuit of systematic and progressive efforts towards the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and that it should be the subject of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament. It would be a mistake, in this regard, to waste time searching for any other new issues and thus stray away from the implementation of the 1995 consensus concerning an FMCT.

As for the subject area that appeared in our report last year under the sub-heading "Proposals for the 'Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament'", we are convinced that the movement towards the goal of nuclear disarmament should be undertaken step by step, in a consistent manner, without artificial restraint but without excessive haste, without setting goals that cannot be reached at a given stage. No one would deny, I think, that in recent years much has been done in practical terms to reduce stockpiles of nuclear weapons and place qualitative limitations on them. The START-1 and START-2 treaties have been concluded, and they will reduce the nuclear stockpiles of the two greatest nuclear States substantially-by two thirds from their "cold war" levels. Agreement has been achieved to conduct negotiations between Russia and the United States on a START-3 treaty, after the entry into force of START-2, which will result in even deeper reductions.

We are in favour of other nuclear Powers joining in the efforts aimed at reducing nuclear weapons. In 1994, the President of the Russian Federation, B.N. Yeltsin, introduced an initiative in the United Nations calling on the five nuclear Powers to draw up and conclude a treaty on nuclear security and strategic stability. This proposal remains on the negotiating table. However, some nuclear Powers believe that further reductions in the stockpiles of the two largest nuclear countries should take place before they join the process of negotiations aimed at reduction and limitation of nuclear weapons. This approach will have to be taken into account.

When it comes to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and their prohibition, which remains our ultimate goal, this would seem not to be possible to accomplish without multilateral negotiations. But in order to reach that point much remains to be done. We are sure that everybody understands this well, and therefore there are no suggestions that the CD should start negotiations on nuclear weapon reductions as a substitute for the bilateral process of START negotiations. There is, however, a proposal for negotiations on "a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time". We, like many others, do not subscribe to this approach.

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As you know, Russia and the United States have agreed that after the entry into force of the START-2 treaty, they will immediately begin negotiations on a START-3 agreement, which will include the establishment by 31 December 2007 of lower aggregate levels of 2,000 to 2,500 strategic nuclear warheads. This, incidentally, was welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/38 M, which was supported by 161 States with none opposed. It is clear that future negotiations among the Five and the implementation of the five-party agreements concerning the further reduction and limitation of nuclear weapons will require a certain amount of time. It is not possible now to say just how much time that will require, but it is clear that the question of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons can in practical terms emerge only after all these intermediate stages have been passed. The question then arises of whether it is possible to deal now in a serious manner with something that may not become a practical matter before the end of the first decade of the next century. Would it not be better to focus on issues that are ripe for action in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, such as an FMCT? In this context we do not believe it timely or useful in terms of the goals of nuclear disarmament to start negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a programme of nuclear disarmament within a time-bound framework, and, like others, we will not be able to support the establishment of an ad hoc committee or working group to conduct such negotiations.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that at the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly the largest vote on the issue of APLs was cast in favour of resolution 52/38 H, which invites the Conference on Disarmament to intensify its efforts on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. One hundred and forty-seven States cast their votes in favour of this approach, with none opposed. This appeal by the international community cannot be ignored.

We agree with many points contained in the recently signed Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines. We do not rule out eventually signing that instrument. However, the present reality is that the Convention does not cover the major historical producers and users of APLs. It is our task not to allow the emergence of a gulf separating those countries which have signed the Convention from those which have not, but rather to achieve cooperation between these two groups of States in those areas where this is possible. We have a good opportunity to do so here at the CD. This is why the Russian delegation supports the re-establishment of the post of CD Special Coordinator on the issue of the prohibition of anti-personnel mines with last year's mandate. We support the beginning in the CD of a gradual process leading eventually towards a truly global ban on the production, use, transfer, etc. of anti-personnel mines. Even now, in our view, as a first step, the Conference could embark on the drafting of a global agreement banning the export and import of APLs.

The alternative to work in the CD on anti-personnel mines is - and this cannot be overlooked - a stalemate in this field, which we are convinced is in

(Mr. Berdennikov, Russian Federation)

nobody's interest and in particular is contrary to the aspirations of those who, day after day, fall victim to the numerous minefields scattered around the world.

For many years the Conference on Disarmament has conducted intensive work on the question of security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. However, this work was suspended in the period when the CD was involved in active negotiations on the comprehensive nuclear test ban. We are in favour of resuming it. We therefore support the re-establishment at our Conference, at the very beginning of the 1998 session, of the Ad Hoc Committee on "negative" assurances with its previous mandate. We can see no other multilateral negotiating body which could take up this question. There is no alternative to the CD on this issue.

The situation is similar as regards the question of preventing an arms race in outer space. Here, too, the important work which had been conducted earlier in the CD was stopped halfway. It is necessary to re-establish the Ad hoc Committee on this issue with the previous mandate, or, if this causes difficulties for anyone, the post of CD special coordinator should be established with a view to agreeing on a new mandate for the Committee. We are convinced that by no means everything has been done to block all the paths towards outer space becoming a sphere of military competition. Under the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, which was concluded as early as 1967, it is forbidding to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, instal such weapons on celestial bodies, or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner. It is, however, a limited measure because it does not block access to outer space for other types of weapons. In principle, we find some merit in the Canadian ideas concerning the non-weaponization of outer space. Here, we are convinced, there is work for the Ad Hoc Committee to do.

Concerning the question of transparency in armaments, let me note that we would not oppose the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency with its previous mandate. In a number of resolutions the United Nations General Assembly has expressed its support for the continuation of that work. We are convinced that, provided no attempts are made to revise the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee, its work could be useful.

Nor would the Russian delegation oppose the re-establishment of the 1997 posts of CD special coordinators on the expansion of its membership, its improved and effective functioning, and its agenda. There is certainly room for improvement in the functioning of the Conference but, here as well, there must be a clear understanding of the limits beyond which constructive work becomes its opposite. In particular, we, like many others, continue to oppose any attempts to abolish, weaken or revise the rule whereby decisions are taken by the Conference only on the basis of consensus.

(Mr. Berdennikov, Russian Federation)

This year, as previously, the Russian delegation stands ready for constructive cooperation, the search for mutually acceptable solutions to acute international disarmament issues. It is my hope that other participants of the Conference will also seek to make the 1998 CD session active and productive.

We believe that the Conference on Disarmament, notwithstanding the present quite understandable difficulties, due primarily to the need to adjust to the new situation following the "cold war" era, remains an indispensable forum and that it would be wrong to speak about a deadlock in its work. Russian support for the Conference on Disarmament remains unchanged.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? In that case, this concludes our business for today. So if there are no more requests for the floor, I intend to adjourn this meeting. But before doing so, I will remind you that the informal open-ended consultations on outer space will begin in this room in 10 minutes' time, at a quarter to twelve.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 5 February 1998 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.783
5 February 1998

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 5 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Norberg (Sweden)

GE.98-60449 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 783rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Egypt, the Syrian Arab Republic, Romania and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Before giving the floor to the speakers inscribed for today, I should like to remind you that we will hold informal open-ended consultations immediately following this plenary meeting, first on agenda item 6, "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", and following that, agenda item 7, "Transparency in armaments", and the consultations will be held in this room.

I now invite the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran, to take the floor.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset to express to you the support of the Egyptian delegation for the informal open-ended consultations to which you referred at the beginning of this meeting, and which you are carrying out with great efficiency on the various items of our agenda with a view to the adoption of the programme of work and the commencement of the substantive work of the 1998 session in conformity with the rules of procedure.

In the general statement that I made before the Conference during its plenary meeting on 22 January, I highlighted the position of Egypt on the issues under consideration in the Conference on Disarmament. Today I have asked for the floor in order to focus on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. In my previous statement before the Conference on Disarmament I explained the concerns which prevented Egypt from signing the Ottawa treaty, namely, the responsibility of the States involved in the deployment of mines in the territories of other States for the clearance of those mines, and national defence and security concerns.

Many attempts were made to reflect these concerns in the final declaration of the CCW Review Conference and the final text of the Ottawa treaty. Unfortunately, however, neither of those documents fully addressed our concerns. I would like here to refer to the final declaration of the CCW Review Conference held in Geneva in 1996, which incorporated a general provision on the responsibility that States involved in the deployment of old mines bear for their clearance. I shall quote from this declaration the following paragraph in English; that is the text that we have available:

(continued in English)

> "Recognizing the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting in mine clearance in affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby-traps."

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

(continued in Arabic)

The Ottawa treaty also contained some vague provisions on mine clearance, with no reference to the responsibility of States involved in the deployment of mines for their clearance. I would like to refer, for example, to article 6, paragraph 3, of the Ottawa treaty, which reads as follows:

(continued in English)

> "Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims and for mine awareness programmes."

(continued in Arabic)

Paragraph 4 of the same article stipulates that:

(continued in English)

> "Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for mine clearance and related activities."

(continued in Arabic)

Today I would like to inform the Conference on Disarmament that, on 27 January 1998, the Executive Board of the World Health Organization adopted resolution EB.101.R23, entitled "Concerted public health action on anti-personnel mines". This resolution was adopted in view of the serious health consequences of anti-personnel landmines and the importance of developing public health programmes for anti-personnel-mine injury prevention and control. Operative paragraph 5 of the said resolution reads as follows (and I quote once again in English):

(continued in English)

> "Urges Governments that have planted mines in the territories of other countries to provide the latter with the required maps and identification of the minefields they planted and to cooperate in minefield clearance in the countries concerned so as to avoid further injuries and deaths of civilians."

(continued in Arabic)

I have asked the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament to circulate this resolution as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

That resolution adopted by the Executive Board of the World Health Organization provides further clear confirmation that the States which planted landmines on the territories of other countries, including Egypt, must assume their responsibility in a more serious manner in the clearance operations by providing the necessary maps and information, as well as the requisite

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

technical and financial resources in order to avoid further injuries and deaths among civilians, create an appropriate environment conducive to the pursuit of the economic and social development process, and prevent further human suffering.

Mr. President, on behalf of the Egyptian delegation I would like to request you to take this aspect of the question of anti-personnel landmines into consideration in your consultations on the various items of the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. The same aspect should also be fully taken into consideration in any future consultations or negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the question of anti-personnel landmines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Al-Hussami.

Mr. AL-HUSSAMI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, it gives my country's delegation pleasure to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are confident that the contributions of your friendly country, Sweden, in the field of disarmament and in international cooperation, as well as your own competence and wide experience, will help to surmount any obstacles that the Conference might encounter and will pave the way for the progress that we are hoping to achieve in our work. My country's delegation would also like to take this opportunity to commend the diligent efforts made by your predecessor, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Mr. Goonetilleke, during the last session. We highly appreciate the attention accorded to our work by the Secretary-General of our Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, with the help of the Conference secretariat. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new ambassadors, hoping that their valuable contributions will promote a creative consensus conducive to the success of our work.

Before discussing our agenda, my country's delegation would like to stress the vital importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole international negotiating forum in this field. The Conference may have been slow in addressing the issues of international disarmament because those issues are highly complex, sensitive and important and because the possession or relinquishment of weapons could affect security and peace at the national, regional and international levels. However, this slowness does not give cause to describe the Conference with various terms that inhibit our aspirations and resolve, nor does it justify steps to circumvent or bypass the Conference, for the simple reason that the Conference is us, the States members thereof. Some amongst us are armed to the teeth with the most dangerous weapons, while others are not only unable to acquire weapons for self-defence but lack even the technology needed for peaceful uses.

Our rules of procedure call for consensus. This consensus, in turn, necessitates agreement on a scale of priorities and the manifestation of political will on the part of everyone, as well as a belief in the principles

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of equality among States, respect for their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and prohibition of the use of force or the threat to use force in international relations. In particular, it requires belief in the principles of justice and equity, especially on the part of the most highly and most dangerously armed, because it is the party in possession of the force to threaten and destroy. There are important reasons for our emphasis on the need to invigorate the Conference on Disarmament and on the principles that should govern this invigoration. Let us consider the principal international instruments in the field of disarmament, including those formulated before the Conference was established, those sponsored by the Conference and those which the Conference tried to tackle but was prevented from so doing.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, known as the NPT, was adopted 30 years ago. However, throughout that long period of time the nuclear States have failed to take the necessary steps to fulfil their obligations under article VI of the treaty. Proliferation has continued, to the extent that we find ourselves faced with a new type of State, the nuclear armed State. Then, the Conference to review and extend the duration of the treaty was held in New York in 1995, not in order to rectify its shortcomings or to call to account those who had failed to honour their obligations but, unfortunately, solely to decide to extend the duration of the treaty for ever, without any provision obliging the nuclear States to get rid of their arsenals within a specified time limit, nor was there any provision for a deadline to achieve the universality of the treaty. Consequently, instead of tightening the prohibition of nuclear proliferation, it actually facilitated this proliferation. This prompts us to ask: in the light of those serious shortcomings, how can the non-nuclear parties assume the sole responsibility for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons? The same also applies to the other important international instruments on disarmament, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (the CTBT) and the international Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines.

For years, the international community has been hoping that international instruments would be adopted to protect it from the dangers of such arms. Some imagined that those instruments had fulfilled their aspirations. In reality, however, those instruments contain flaws that have prevented my country and many other countries from acceding to them. These flaws are dangerous because they imply bias, discrimination and a denial of legitimate security concerns at the national, regional and international levels. The control of any weapon should be completely watertight; otherwise, in practice, the instrument governing its control would remain ink on paper, especially if the weapon concerned was one of mass destruction. Moreover, where is the sound logic in requiring States to renounce small, defensive weapons before requiring them to renounce the most lethal weapons of mass destruction? This can be interpreted only as an attempt to enable the strong to remain strong and to deny any strength to the weak.

That is why we stress the need to promote positive dialogue in this important international forum, a dialogue that will enable us to take

(Mr. Al-Hussami, Syrian Arab Republic)

coherent, firm, viable and enforceable decisions which we can submit to the international community with confidence that our peoples - all our peoples - will welcome them with satisfaction.

Mr. President, the reason that prompted us to state the above was the desire which you yourself expressed and which was also referred to by the representatives who spoke before me - that is to say, the desire and the determination to invigorate the Conference, reaffirm its mandate and tackle its issues with flexibility. We all agree that the time has come to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We have before us a number of proposals that define the nature and the mandate of this ad hoc committee. Since this issue is at the top of our scale of priorities, our success or failure therein will inevitably have a positive or negative effect on our approach to other subjects. What we would like to say is that the goal is not just to establish the ad hoc committee or a committee whose task is merely to deliberate. Our goal is to establish a committee that will enjoy a substantive mandate and a timetable as provided for in United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 L and which will embody the aspiration of peoples, including the peoples of the nuclear States themselves.

I represent a developing State working for peace, not for aggression. My Government's primary concern is to meet our people's need to defend their land, their existence and their achievements. However, part of the territory of my homeland has been suffering for decades under military occupation, and the occupying Power possesses the largest arsenal in the region, an arsenal containing weapons of all types and of the most modern technology and, above all, the most dangerous of weapons of mass destruction, namely nuclear arms. Moreover, the borders of my country are long and need to be protected against infiltrators, saboteurs and smugglers. Therefore, the ranking of my priorities in the area of disarmament is obvious and easily understandable.

My country was among the first States that signed and subsequently ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968. What happened then? Eventually, all the countries of the region acceded to the treaty, except Israel, which acquired nuclear arms with impunity and with the full knowledge of the entire international community, and now possesses three nuclear reactors for military purposes and about 200 nuclear bombs. Today, it threatens the whole region with the most modern and dangerous arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Syria has also signed an inspection and safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), while Israel continues to refuse to sign such an agreement or to allow IAEA inspectors to inspect the Israeli nuclear installations. For years, Syria, together with the Arab countries of the region, has been calling for the Middle East to be declared a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, while Israel is doing nothing to achieve such a goal, because it is the only nuclear State in the region and is seeking to preserve its nuclear arms monopoly in order to continue to occupy Arab land, impose its hegemony and dictate its terms.

Where is the Conference on Disarmament in all of this? What is its position? It has remained silent. Rather, I should say that we hear voices,

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but voices which surprise us, voices which call upon us to renounce the weakest weapon with which we can protect the borders of our homeland, namely mines. Then there are other voices calling upon us to accede to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which is unable even to discharge its basic function because it disregards the question of the manufacture and production of those weapons, in the same way as it has disregarded other types of more lethal and devastating weapons, such as weapons of mass destruction, to the extent that transparency therein does not allow us to see more than the tip of the iceberg on the surface of the ocean.

We are neither engaged in the nuclear arms race nor in the race to militarize outer space or exploit it for espionage purposes. It is not we who are endeavouring to produce fissionable materials for military purposes. The responsibility of the States concerned is clear in these matters. We would welcome any progress that the Conference on Disarmament might achieve in this regard or in regard to the adoption of effective international arrangements to assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. Rest assured, Mr. President, that our primary concern is to cooperate with you in order to strengthen the mandate of this Conference with a view to saving future generations from the scourge of war.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Mr. Grecu.

Mr. GRECU (Romania): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you most sincerely on your assumption of the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament. It is true that every commencement of a new session constitutes a challenging endeavour for the presidency of this body. But you and your team are working admirably well to pave the way for tangible progress and deserve our full praise and support. Please rest assured of my delegation's full cooperation. You are assisted by a very competent and devoted secretariat, to which I would like to pay tribute and wish every success in this 1998 session.

Let me also express Romania's appreciation to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, for a job well done, and address a warm welcome to our new colleagues who have joined us recently in the Conference.

At the dawn of a new millennium, the world has been given an historic chance to build democratic and effective international structures able to develop international relations in adherence to certain fundamental principles, such as undiminished security for all nations, the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, cooperation, transparency and openness, allegiance to arms control and confidence-building measures. If we look back at the period that has elapsed since 1990, the assessment is convincingly clear: as one of the top priorities of the global agenda, the process of arms control and disarmament has seized that historic opportunity and, through accomplishments so far, solid ground has been laid for future, durable progress.

(Mr. Grecu, Romania)

In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, "with the end of the super-Power rivalry, nations everywhere have come to recognize their stake in the success of multilateral negotiations and the monitoring of weapons developments". Important treaties of universal vocation have been concluded, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and existing arms control regimes have been strengthened or are in the process of being improved in terms of efficiency and enforcement mechanisms, as in the case of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), respectively. During these years freed from ideological confrontation, disarmament has also advanced unilaterally, on a bilateral basis or within regional frameworks.

There is no doubt that the CD has played a pivotal role in the post-cold-war process of disarmament and of enhancing security. Regrettably, however, the Conference came under sharp criticism as it was unable to start concrete negotiations immediately after the completion of the CTBT in 1996. Although the CD could have done better than spend the whole of last year's session with little result, my delegation strongly believes that its relevance and credibility should not be questioned. One too often forgets that the Conference, as has been rightly pointed out, is not necessarily a "treaty factory", producing a legal instrument every two years, but rather a forum of dialogue for promoting global security through cooperation and mutual understanding, engaging itself in negotiations only when the issues are consensually deemed ripe to that end. This is why I am inclined to name 1997 no less than a year of reflection, better information among delegations, and laying the ground for a more propitious juncture.

Will 1998 be the session of such a juncture? Is the political will going to re-emerge and break the deadlock looming over yet another session? My delegation earnestly hopes so and will try to do its utmost to this end.

Romania's priorities in 1998 regarding the CD are clear-cut: we expect the Conference to start negotiations on a fissile material "cut-off" treaty (FMCT) and to take the necessary steps towards the universalization of the recently signed Ottawa Convention on the total prohibition of anti-personnel landmines.

My Government shares the view that a "cut-off" treaty should be the next logical approach in the ongoing process of nuclear disarmament, after the completion of the CTBT. It has been written down in the documents of the NPT Review and Extension Conference, endorsed by consensus by more than 180 States less than three years ago. For its part, Romania prefers to stick to the 1995 agreement. We reiterate our firm conviction that the FMCT will cap the amount of fissile materials available for explosive military purposes not only in nuclear-weapons States, but also in those States which currently have unsafeguarded enrichment or reprocessing plants. It will contribute to ensuring the conditions under which the process of nuclear disarmament can broaden, will constrain the opportunities for vertical proliferation and help prevent any future resumption of the nuclear arms race.

(Mr. Grecu, Romania)

We only regret that, despite broad international support, negotiations on a "cut-off" treaty have not yet begun in the CD. It is our strong hope that in 1998 the Conference will lay aside unproductive linkages and conditions, and will be able to reach a consensus along the lines contained in the March 1995 mandate.

On nuclear disarmament, for Romania, too, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the supreme objective towards building a safer world for the generations to come. My country warmly welcomes the efforts by both the United States and Russia to dismantle their strategic weapons delivery systems, which we understand are well ahead of the schedule provided for by START I. The ratification of START II by the United States Senate constitutes yet another encouraging step on the road towards a more dramatic reduction of strategic offensive weapons, which we hope will be followed by a similar gesture from the competent Russian authorities. It is undeniable that the achievements so far are impressive. Unthinkable just 10 years ago, they have indicated a viable, realistic and concrete path to follow. As agreed by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin during their March 1997 Helsinki summit, once START II enters into force, the United States and the Russian Federation will begin negotiations on a START III agreement. We share the view that entry into force and implementation of START II and achieving START III will make a major contribution towards the ultimate goal of all NPT parties of a world free of nuclear weapons and the threat of war.

The other substantive issue my country would like to see negotiated within the CD's current session refers to anti-personnel landmines (APLs). Last December, in Ottawa, Romania signed the "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". Apart from humanitarian considerations, this was largely the result of the internal reassessment of my country's military doctrine from a communitarian perspective rather than from a national viewpoint, engaging in cooperative security enhancement endeavours as part of a stability-fostering policy in its region and beyond. As a logical consequence, we view our commitment to this Convention as both politically and morally binding. We believe that the military issues characterized as disadvantages by our own domestic critics of this decision will become entirely meaningless once Romania reaches its target of Euro-Atlantic integration by the end of this millennium.

The conclusion of the Ottawa Convention not only stands out as a humanitarian achievement, but also brings to fruition an important arms control and disarmament measure. Albeit these considerations, we should not hold on to its fulfilment only in the framework of like-minded States, but venture beyond it by reaching those countries which still rely on APLs to enhance their defence capabilities. This is why, in Romania's view, the success of the Ottawa Process should stimulate discussion on the APLs issue within the Conference on Disarmament, thus providing wider involvement, enabling a broader implementation of its final product. The Conference on Disarmament is a forum with large representation and valuable expertise, within which participate countries with significant mine-producing

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capabilities, States in regions of tension, as well as States where APLs are still being retained as a military option. We therefore see complementarity, not conflict, between the Ottawa Convention and the CD's work on landmines.

In this spirit, Romania co-sponsored the recently adopted United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 H, entitled "Contributions towards banning anti-personnel landmines", which invites the Conference on Disarmament to intensify its efforts on the issue of APLs. We believe an appropriate response to that invitation could be the reappointment of a Special Coordinator on landmines, entrusted to build upon the accomplishments so far, and to prepare the ground for a rapid establishment of an ad hoc committee to launch substantive negotiations in this field. As recently suggested by President Clinton, the first goal of such negotiations could be a worldwide ban on the export of APLs, which Romania believes is entirely feasible for the CD to achieve and in line with the objective of making the Ottawa regime universal.

Proclaiming our national objectives for the 1998 session does not mean that my delegation will oppose debating other aspects of interest on the agenda. On the contrary, we would be very pleased to see consensus emerging on the issue of transparency in armaments (TIA). Despite the fact that conventional weapons inflict so great a toll in conflicts and human suffering worldwide, unfortunately the matter has long evaded the Conference, being overshadowed by nuclear issues. The time has come to strike a more equitable balance and, as the international community expects, acknowledge the importance conventional armaments have in terms of peace and security.

Among the topics that deserve consideration within that framework is the idea of a "code of conduct" in conventional arms transfers. Romania is proud to have introduced, within the CD, an official proposal in this respect, together with a draft code, under the symbol CD/1257. Such an instrument is intended to bring about restraint and responsibility both of exporters and recipients. It also envisages the maintenance of equal and undiminished security of States at the lowest levels of armaments. Basic principles of conduct, criteria to be followed in considering arms transfers or in avoiding arms transfers, respectively, as well as an appropriate mechanism of data sharing and consultations, should be examined equally when discussing an international instrument of this kind.

It is my delegation's hope that a debate on TIA will begin this session, and proposals such as the "code of conduct" will be duly taken into consideration.

Romania could also join a consensus on starting concrete work on negative security assurances (NSA) and prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS), as well as on other topics of interest to delegations around this table.

Procedural issues, such as the agenda, improved and effective functioning and membership could also be dealt with to the general benefit of the CD, its relevance and efficiency. Nearly a decade after the end of the cold war the issue of reviewing the agenda is particularly acute, as is the bloc politics of which the current agenda is much too accurate a mirror. The

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aim of the process should be a new agenda better-tuned to the present international climate and its tendencies, as well as to the aspirations in the field of disarmament of various countries represented at the CD. Moreover, the agenda should constitute a stimulus to follow those tendencies in order to achieve commonly shared goals and aspirations. In brief, it should be a reflection of the present, and not a consecration of the past, and it should inspire, rather than inhibit, our work. And perhaps, before anything else, it should be more focused and far shorter.

There are indeed opportunities for good, useful work here in the Conference.

Let me conclude by saying that Romania will participate at this 1998 CD session with hope and determination - with hope that the Conference will reinvigorate faith in its innate mission, while adapting itself to changing circumstances and demands; with determination to contribute, along with partner countries from NATO and the European Union, and in cooperation with all member States of the Conference, to our common success in fulfilling global security imperatives.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Romania for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Khorram.

Mr. KHORRAM (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. Given your experience and qualification in multilateral diplomacy, I am certain that under your presidency we will be able to find a solution to the difficulties facing the Conference, including its programme of work. I should also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for their valuable services to the work of the Conference.

At the threshold of the third millennium, a new international civil society is taking shape in which the concept of "power" is undergoing a drastic change. Power no longer can, nor should, be derived from possession of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Though seeming almost impossible due, by and large, to long-standing mindsets, such a society should be based on "the power of law" rather than "the law of power", a society whose very existence requires the maintenance and strengthening of regional and international peace and security. I do not intend to portray a rosy picture. What I am driving at is the fact that, in spite of all the difficulties involved, there is now a compelling need for a change in the status quo.

Some may, for various political considerations, attempt to contend otherwise or cast doubts on the view shared by a large majority of members of the international community.

However, we should not forget the dreadful consequences of the two world wars: balance of terror, numerous regional conflicts, genocide, ethnic

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cleansing and occupation. These are not the challenges of the past. There exists at any moment the possibility of a recurrence of these nightmares.

The CD, as the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament, has a vital and indispensable role in ensuring international peace and security. Its contributions to this objective are even greater than before. It is also as relevant as at the time of its inception. Even if the CD were non-existent, we would have to create it, for its absence, marginalization or inaction would have dangerous consequences for the world.

In the last couple of weeks, since commencement of its 1998 session, some delegations have contended that the CD is undergoing an important test; it is facing a "crisis", a "stalemate" or a "deadlock". Some have gone so far as to call into question the capacity of the CD to deal with nuclear disarmament, or to name rivals for it. This is all to monopolize disarmament negotiations at a time of open calls for multilateralism in disarmament negotiations. Not intending to oppose these contentions, I believe that it is the CD which has put its members to the test, and that we have a common responsibility to ensure its effectiveness by addressing the security concerns of the international community.

Having said that, let me now touch upon the question of the programme of work of the Conference. Disagreement on the CD's programme of work, as previously seen, is surmountable. We should not lose heart at the slow pace of progress in this regard. While underscoring the significance of political will and flexibility, I view that our deliberations and discussions on this issue provide better understanding, which is essential for achieving a consensus programme of work.

With the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and its entry into force, as well as the prospective conclusion of negotiations on an additional protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), two categories of weapons of mass destruction would be under effective international monitoring and control. What concerns us most is the fact that nuclear weapons, the deadliest of all, are unbridledly developed and upgraded. An initiative for total elimination of these weapons is to be launched so as to wipe out the impending threats of nuclear weapons, a required step in the right direction of a world free of fear, as called for in the United Nations Charter.

The question of nuclear disarmament has always been top of the United Nations agenda. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), despite all its shortcomings, provides, in article VI, for negotiations aimed at effective measures for nuclear disarmament. As the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, put it in 1968: "The Treaty is not an end in itself but a step toward disarmament". The recent far-reaching changes in the world have necessitated the urgent need for genuine multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In this context, the CD's contribution, as the most appropriate forum for such an initiative in terms of expertise and mandate, cannot be ignored. That is why we strongly support any initiative bringing balance to the programme of work of the Conference. Trifling with this important mandate would only undermine the credibility and relevance of the

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Conference. Notwithstanding, this should not be construed as an attempt to rule out the possibility of complementary efforts, including, inter alia, bilateral measures in nuclear weapons reduction.

In this regard, I would like to state that the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes South Africa's proposal for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. But it believes that the mandate and the functions of the ad hoc committee should not be confined to deliberations only. Existing proposals and future initiatives should be taken into account in defining the mandate of the ad hoc committee.

We are much heartened at seeing that a compromise on the programme of work is imminent. Decisions on re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances (NSA), as well as appointment of a special coordinator on prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS), would certainly make us roll up our sleeves and start substantive work. But that is not all. The ad hoc committee on NSA should, unlike its experience in 1994, focus on substantive issues so as to facilitate early negotiation on a legally binding instrument. Moreover, mindful of the military uses of outer space that constitute enormous threats to international peace and security, our efforts should not stop at appointing a special coordinator on PAROS. As a further step, serious thoughts should be given to the revival of the ad hoc committee on PAROS.

Where there is a will, there is a way. An active and progressive CD is not out of reach, provided that political will and commitment towards real disarmament are available. Time is of the essence. The coming generations will never forgive us if we do not seize the emerging opportunities.

These are my preliminary remarks on the question of the programme of work of the CD, and I intend to elaborate on the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran at an opportune time.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

I should now like to take up for decision the request from Jordan to participate in the work of the Conference as an observer. This request is contained in document CD/WP.494, which is before you. May I take it that this request is acceptable?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our business for today. Before adjourning the meeting I remind you that, as I said when we started this meeting, we will hold informal consultations in this room, and we will start in 10 minutes' time, at 11.20 a.m. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 12 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.784
12 February 1998

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 12 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Norberg (Sweden)

GE.98-60480 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 784th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Algeria, Sri Lanka (who will speak on behalf of the Group of 21), the Netherlands, Finland, Poland, India and the United States. I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Mr. Peeters.

Mr. PEETERS (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, at the 22 January 1998 plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, Belgium took the floor to explain both its position on and its concern about nuclear issues. At that time, if I may remind you, it explained its absolute scepticism about the multilateralization of nuclear disarmament at the present stage and about drawing up a timetable for the process. But we also said that it was right and desirable for the international community that an official and regular dialogue on the progress of nuclear cutbacks should begin in the Conference on Disarmament. An official dialogue within the Conference on Disarmament would enable the nuclear States to acknowledge the legitimate interest shown by other States in these issues, and to respond to it. A regular dialogue would allow everyone to follow the evolution of this fundamental issue, to assess the progress and the difficulties. There can be no doubt that such a dialogue would make it possible to establish between the nuclear States and those which are non-nuclear a climate of trust and a synergy of support that for the time being are lacking.

In our first statement we also mentioned the importance we attached to the South African proposal. We wish to express this interest today through a new proposal that shows how open-minded we are and gives practical expression to the ideas I have been explaining. This proposal, which I will ask you to distribute as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament reads as follows:

> "The Conference on Disarmament decides to establish an ad hoc group for reflection and study on ways and means of opening an exchange of information within the Conference on matters relating to article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

Belgium is aware that this is a modest proposal. We feel, however, that only realistic ambitions can enable the Conference on Disarmament to play the role it has thus far not been able to play on these matters. If, as happened last year, some of us persist in setting over-ambitious targets, then no progress can be expected. We will continue this dialogue of the deaf which made our work so unproductive in 1997. By wanting everything and wanting it straight away, we managed to achieve nothing. This is the pattern we have to change. And there is no other motive underlying the Belgian proposal.

I would like to close by stressing that the path we are seeking to open up can be taken by everybody. It can be taken without giving up basic positions which experience and analysis have shown us to be irreconcilable. However, we cannot disregard the importance that some States or groups of States attach to those positions. All of that being the case, let us start by

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taking a step that is modest but nonetheless significant, and leave to a later stage the task of reaching a final decision on this issue. We can do this without addressing questions of fundamental principle straight away, and in particular without giving up our principles.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement, and the proposal he has submitted will be circulated as an official document as soon as possible. I now invite the representative of Brazil, Ambassador Saboia, to take the floor.

Mr. SABOIA (Brazil): The head of the Brazilian delegation, Ambassador Lafer, had originally intended to present this statement. Unfortunately, an insidious virus has prevented him from being with us today.

Mr. President, in the statement made by the head of the Brazilian delegation at the opening plenary meeting of this Conference on 20 January, he had the occasion to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. As your term of office draws to a close, I would like to express sincere appreciation for the laborious efforts you have undertaken up to now and which got us off to a purposeful start in 1998. Thanks to your skilful guidance the Conference now finds itself in possession of an agenda and is actively engaged in consultations, both at the group level and with the entire membership, on how best to address the issues inscribed in it. Seen against the background of the frustration and impasse which marked last year's session, these are encouraging developments that should be pursued.

In order to help in this process, Brazil has made clear on many occasions its willingness to seek and support balanced and reasonable solutions so that all issues before the Conference can be properly dealt with. The focused discussions we have been holding under your presidency are proving to be useful as a consensus-building tool which may lead the Conference to agreeing to specific frameworks and mandates to deal with the issues before it. The ultimate success of such discussions depends, however, on them not becoming a dialogue of the deaf. Allowing substantive work to proceed requires heeding legitimate concerns from all sides.

Let me share Brazil's views on some of these issues. With regard to outer space, it is our expectation that consultations under a special coordinator would lead to the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee with an updated mandate, as the Conference was invited to undertake by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 52/37. The outer space Ad Hoc Committee met for the last time in 1994. Since then, there have been important technological advances, making it timely for the issue to be addressed again by the CD.

Concerning anti-personnel landmines, 1997 was a watershed year, with the successful conclusion of the Ottawa Convention. That instrument has so far received more than 120 signatures, including overwhelming support from Latin American countries. In addition to the Ottawa Convention, Brazil is a signatory of Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Both are now under consideration by the Brazilian Congress, and we

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hope they will enter into force and will enjoy universal participation as soon as possible. Despite the existence of these two legal instruments, one of which is of a comprehensive nature, Brazil is ready to consider positively a CD role on this subject as well, if such a course of action can effectively contribute to deepen the involvement of countries currently outside these instruments in international initiatives for the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, demining and related humanitarian assistance. Given this particular situation, special care should be taken, in our view, in order to avoid possible duplication and dispersal of efforts.

We are sure that there can also be productive ways for the CD to address other issues under agenda items 6 and 7. Transparency in armaments allows for various possible approaches, that could at this juncture be usefully explored by a special coordinator. Some novel ideas concerning conventional weapons put forward by Canada and Mexico are worthy of serious consideration, such as, respectively, a code of conduct on arms transfers, and a global norm on illicit arms trafficking. Possible CD work in the field of conventional weapons should not detract us from pursuing the improvement of existing mechanisms, such as the United Nations Register and the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures.

Notwithstanding the importance of finding ways and means for the CD to deal with the above-mentioned issues, it is clear that for Brazil, as for the large majority of countries of the world and of those represented around this table, nuclear disarmament continues to be the paramount concern, one for which a substantive CD role must be found. As Ambassador Selebi of South Africa has put it, and Ambassador Anne Anderson of Ireland aptly highlighted, today this organ stands at a "crossroads of relevance". The single multilateral disarmament negotiating body should no longer be prevented from addressing the principal disarmament question of our time.

Brazil decided to lend its early and immediate support to the South African initiative on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament (CD/1483) precisely because we saw in it an opportunity for the CD both to break the deadlock that has hampered its work since 1997 and to take its rightful place in contributing to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Careful and balanced drafting, drawing on previously floated ideas, has allowed a significant cross-group section of opinion to coalesce around this draft, which should be put to decision forthwith. Indeed, it is difficult to understand, and harder still to explain to informed opinion, why this body shouldn't be allowed to establish a mechanism for this purpose.

An ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament on the basis of what is being proposed would first need to identify issues for negotiation. It could serve as a forum where ongoing discussions on nuclear disarmament could be the subject of periodic information and clarifications by those directly engaged in them. As to consideration of proposals, there is no shortage of serious and informed studies on the question of nuclear weapons elimination, both from governmental and independent sources. Further, useful preparatory work on certain aspects of nuclear verification could be envisaged, as was the case

(Mr. Saboia, Brazil)

with the Group of Seismic Experts exercise, which paved the way for a CTBT verification mechanism before there was consensus on a negotiating mandate for the CTBT Ad Hoc Committee.

Another related issue is the negotiation of a fissile materials treaty. Brazil supports that work on this topic be based on the Shannon report (CD/1299). As we have stated before, the various verification cost scenarios should be discussed from the outset of negotiations, and should not unduly burden those whose obligations already preclude them from producing these materials. Moreover, the question of the treatment of existing stocks is directly relevant for such a treaty to make a genuine contribution to nuclear disarmament - and not merely to codify a situation which to a large extent already exists, since most nuclear-weapon States have already ceased production of these materials. Disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually supportive, but still different concepts. This is why we should be careful in determining under which circumstances a fissile materials production ban can in fact positively impact nuclear disarmament.

Brazil of course commends and encourages the United States and the Russian Federation in their efforts to bring down their nuclear arsenals. We hope that START-II will be ratified as soon as possible, paving the way for still further cuts and for strategic nuclear warhead destruction under START-III, as jointly stated by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin nearly a year ago in Helsinki. We have no quarrel with the view that the START process should, for now, continue to be conducted between the United States of America and the Russian Federation and hope that the other nuclear-weapon States will concurrently engage in substantive reductions.

While considering a CD role in nuclear disarmament, we have heard the argument that this could negatively interfere with the START process. Needless to say, we do not subscribe to this point of view. Any actual negotiation on nuclear disarmament in an ad hoc committee established for that purpose in the CD would of course have to be subject to the consent of all parties, which means both exercises would have to be compatible were they to run in parallel for some time. Moreover, what we really do not see is how a CD nuclear disarmament ad hoc committee established on the basis of CD/1483 can set back the START process. Quite the contrary, issues identified and which would merit consensual agreement for negotiation in the committee would certainly provide additional support for START. In a range of nuclear disarmament issues, the CD could complement and reinforce what for the time being is dealt with elsewhere. After all, isn't a similar approach being proposed here with regard to anti-personnel landmines?

The existence of a reduction process should not be argued against finding a role for the CD and for other forums on nuclear disarmament. We note, for instance, the emphasis placed on nuclear disarmament issues in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's strengthened review process. This point was stressed by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso last year when submitting to the Brazilian Congress a request for authorization to accede to the NPT. At that time, he also indicated our intention to contribute to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation from within the Treaty's mechanisms.

(Mr. Saboia, Brazil)

We often hear the assertion that today's needs in terms of disarmament efforts to be undertaken by this Conference are at variance from those set out in its "nuclear-biased" agenda. It is true that many countries' positions with regard to certain aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation issues have evolved, and the world today is indeed very different from what it was just a few years ago. The CD can play a role in conventional weapons and, as stated before, we are quite ready to engage in discussing proposals to that effect.

But some of the very changes in international affairs we have been witnessing in the past few years only add, in our view, to the timeliness and urgency of the CD taking up the task of formally addressing the problem of nuclear disarmament. A basic consideration here is precisely the fact that for some years now the world has no longer been divided between opposite ideological and military camps. Confrontation and tense coexistence have given way to consultation and cooperation. A world no longer subject to the tensions of East-West confrontation should encourage nuclear-weapon States to de-emphasize the role ascribed to nuclear weapons in their security strategies.

Yet nuclear weapons, albeit in lower overall numbers, remain entrenched in possessor States' security calculations. And so does deterrence doctrine, with its "mutually assured destruction" rationale essentially unchanged despite the fact that the two principal nuclear Powers are no longer antagonists. Why should such quintessential instruments and symbols of the cold war linger on when the cold war itself is clearly over?

Unfortunately, the end of the cold war has not, it seems, broken the spell cast by nuclear weapons over their possessors. Some governments, alliances and powerful lobbies are busy devising new roles for them. Significantly, nuclear deterrence has been taking some disconcerting twists and turns these days, making the role of nuclear weapons more ambiguous and diffuse. Expanding the range of hypothetical uses for nuclear weapons to cover perceived new threats raises disturbing questions. First, a nuclear retaliation to an attack with other weapons of mass destruction would hardly be an exemplary way of dealing with what would have been a violation of the most basic moral standards and all norms of civilized behaviour. It would also dangerously raise the ante in any such conflict, either by risking the involvement of other nuclear Powers or by providing a new stimulus for nuclear proliferation. This is not to speak of the most unspeakable consequences that such nuclear retaliation would carry, with devastating and indiscriminate effects extrapolating actual blast targets and possibly even the targeted country. Second, in case the perpetrator is a non-State actor, whom or what would a nuclear retaliatory strike be supposed to be directed against? These uncertainties and ambiguities, some of which are calculated and intentional, can nonetheless lead to calamitous consequences. Furthermore, traditional risks remain, such as a mistaken report of a non-existent incoming nuclear attack prompting a response that is for real and other possible accidents. The point here is that no amount of rationalization can make the mere existence of nuclear weapons less perilous.

(Mr. Saboia, Brazil)

The current situation regarding nuclear weapons and the roles envisaged for them can only reinforce our long-standing conclusion that mankind's best guarantee against one day having to cope with nuclear disaster continues to be the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. The threat posed by them affects all States; none is spared from the effects of their very existence, just as none would be from the horrors of actual use. The international community therefore has a genuine interest in, and a legitimate right to press for, a commitment on the part of all States in that regard. It is also justified in asking to have a say on modalities and phases for nuclear disarmament.

It is significant to note that a growing segment of non-governmental opinion is making itself increasingly heard on the issue of nuclear abolition, a trend which has as one of its recent landmarks the 1996 report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, presented to this Conference a year ago. Studies on abolition such as those prepared by the Stimson Center, on nuclear prohibition and no first use by the United States National Academy of Sciences, the model nuclear weapons convention, among many others, clearly show that various approaches leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons are seriously and thoroughly being pursued. This Conference would surely benefit were it allowed, as other forums dealing with global themes are, to hear these voices which sound directly from civil society in many countries. Participation in campaigns for abolition by both ex-military and international civilian leaders of high rank and political standing, such as those who signed a statement on nuclear weapons at the beginning of this month, show that political constituencies within States are increasingly aware of the political, economic, environmental and above all moral implications of continuing to rely on weapons which represent the negation of the highest values of human civilization.

In the ongoing struggle to rid the world of the nuclear threat, we take heed in this growing wave of concerned citizens' support for the cause of nuclear abolition, seeking deliverance from the cold war instruments of fear and terror. The CD cannot remain a huis clos, forever oblivious to this clamour. Emile Zola's courageous protestations, whose centennial is celebrated this year, should provide renewed source of inspiration and strength for all those who dare to take a stand drawing on moral principle. Then, as now, "La vérité est en marche et rien ne l'arrêtera".

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Algeria, Ambassador Dembri, to take the floor.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time in plenary, Mr. President, allow me to extend my warmest congratulations to you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to express to you our great appreciation of your positive contribution to progress in our work thanks to your personal qualities and your profound knowledge of this body. I would also like to assure you of my delegation's full support, and to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament - the

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Ambassadors of China, India, Iran, Japan, the Netherlands, Peru, Sri Lanka, the United States of America and Poland. I would also like to express the gratitude we all owe to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all the members of the secretariat for their assistance and readiness to help.

I would like to start by recalling that the Conference on Disarmament is a body set up by the international community with a deliberately limited make-up allowing it better to respond to the negotiating mission assigned to it. This incontestably pinpoints the individual responsibility and collective responsibility of all member States, which are accountable to the community of nations for action taken in the field of disarmament. This is also a body which, since it is the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, helps to shape and finalize multilateral treaties since disarmament is closely linked to collective security and should not legitimately be conducted outside this multilateral framework. Finally, the Conference on Disarmament is the framework within which national or other interests must necessarily conduct a dialogue, even if they diverge, in order to be able to fit into a collective symbiosis, which alone can bring us closer to the path to a world rid of arms. These interests should not curb action, but on the contrary should serve as a catalyst for action in order to link up with those of the international community. In any event, the former cannot replace the latter, still less thwart them.

I wished to remind the Conference of these principles which are familiar and recognized - but I am sorry to be blunt - very often forgotten by us within our Conference which is thus penalized by the perverse effects generated as specific interests are inexplicably blown up out of all proportion. These interests may be felt to be natural, but ultimately the way in which they are currently expressed distorts the multilateral action which it is our task to pursue here. How, then, can we fail to be alarmed at the fact that issues which are within the competence of the Conference on Disarmament are increasingly being addressed outside this forum? That is why the Conference has no moral authority to present the international community with a negative report on its work, because it is supposed to give impetus to multilateral negotiating diplomacy based on convergence and consensus far removed from the spirit of confrontation. These negotiations nurtured by the machinery in use in our Conference cannot be properly undertaken if, here or there, security interests and specific convictions are elevated to the rank of dogma.

For its part the delegation of Algeria, although it feels that some items on our agenda have priority over others, wishes to consider with an open mind the structured examination of all the items on our agenda. In other words, it feels that these subjects are all eligible for negotiation here. Because of the time allotted to us and the human resources available, it is possible that we will be led to place one item ahead of another. But this choice must be made on the basis of how urgent issues are and not on the basis of an imposed political rank-setting which gives one item value and denies other items any merit. Recognition of the political and security merits of negotiating on all the items on our agenda is an essential condition of

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present and future progress in our work and intrinsic confirmation that the Conference on Disarmament indeed enjoys the status of sole negotiating forum if we are to avoid the risk of its being sidelined because of lack of action and then stripped of the role which was thus conferred upon it by the first United Nations General Assembly special session on disarmament in 1978.

The above considerations make it possible to understand better why nuclear disarmament is at the centre of our concerns, not that this issue is the exclusive task of the Conference on Disarmament but because it is the most profound expectation of the international community and because in each human being it focuses the dread of mass destruction and extermination. Consequently we must rid ourselves of inhibitions or mental blocks which prevent us from tackling this subject here.

The accumulation of delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons that has already been recorded, their quantities and their excessive sophistication are a challenge to the international community as a whole and shift nuclear disarmament away from the exclusive competence of the nuclear States, converting it into an international security issue which the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament, can and naturally must tackle. This multilateralization is essential and it can be effectively undertaken with an eye to the security interests of all involved and without detriment to the bilateral process of nuclear disarmament on which the two largest possessors of nuclear arsenals have embarked. In this regard, we cannot ignore here the voice of international public opinion and civil society, which, in all forums, media and public debates, continue to remind us:

That nuclear weapons constitute a threat to the human race and to international security;

That there is increasingly little justification for their possession in the light of the new world order, the prime feature of which has been the disappearance of antagonism between blocs and thus the logical end of the function of deterrence;

That nuclear disarmament must be given absolute priority if we are to prevent a mismatch between the military doctrines of the nuclear States and the concerns of human societies;

That the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament back in 1978 made nuclear disarmament a priority. Today more than ever before it is a priority that is within reach if the political will exists;

That the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 8 July 1996 on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, declared that all States, and not just the nuclear States, have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control;

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That the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, including the most recent one, resolution 52/38 L, must be taken into consideration and apprehended in the light of their prime merit, which is that of giving specific shape to the aspirations of the international community for the setting up, in 1998, of an ad hoc committee within the Conference on Disarmament which will deal with nuclear disarmament;

That nuclear disarmament cannot be seen as falling within the sole competence of the nuclear States, which would either set the scale of responsibilities on its head or remove all responsibility from the community of non-nuclear States, thus very quickly disqualifying the Conference on Disarmament.

All these appeals map out the Conference on Disarmament's sphere of competence. Multilateralization is a political, legal and security imperative and provides the justification for our presence here. How must it be put into effect, and by what modus operandi? Yet again, there are a few principles which could help to build consensus within our forum. First of all, the most appropriate organizational arrangement is the creation of a negotiating mechanism, i.e. an ad hoc committee, which should negotiate and not just cogitate. Cogitation is, we agree, an exercise inherent in negotiation, but negotiation must be its logical culmination. Secondly, non-proliferation and disarmament - as my distinguished colleague Gilberto Saboia said before me - are two inseparable dimensions which strengthen or weaken each other, but there comes a time when non-proliferation needs to be reinvigorated by disarmament, otherwise it will run up against its limits. That time has now come. Thirdly, the establishment of an ad hoc committee within the Conference on Disarmament cannot be taken as interference, a hindrance or an attempt to strip the United States of America and Russia of their obligation, which is a reality today, as we recognize, to continue cutting back their nuclear arsenals. The ongoing bilateral process, which we welcome, should be able to benefit from multilateral input from the Conference on Disarmament. The two processes are not mutually exclusive: on the contrary, they complement one another through the action taken simultaneously between the two great Powers mentioned earlier and within the Conference on Disarmament. How could this body, whose function it is to give specific shape to the multilateral disarmament effort, harm or be detrimental to another disarmament effort?

There is no lack of proposals within the Conference on Disarmament for specific negotiating work or to prepare the framework suitable for such negotiations: we have the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by 28 delegations in the G.21, including Algeria, the work of the Canberra Commission, the proposed terms of reference for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament submitted by 26 delegations from the G.21, including Algeria, a proposal from Egypt and more recently a proposal from South Africa, and this very morning a proposal from Belgium. A solution drawing on all these proposals can be reached, and a decision is awaited from the Conference on Disarmament. The spectrum of proposals is already fairly wide: what we now need is to affirm our political will to tackle nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, a political will not to keep it

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out of the multilateral arena by invoking dogmatically perceived security interests running counter to the collective interests of the international community.

Last year at this time, we quoted a work by two major scientists, Georges Charpak, the French winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, and the American scientist, Richard Garwin, entitled Feux follets et champignons nucléaires, in which they gave an authoritative explanation of how we can reduce nuclear stockpiles at lower cost and how we can maintain levels of deterrence compatible with the security needs of the nuclear-weapon States. In so doing, these two great scientists were responding to the desire of international public opinion to rid our planet of the nuclear risk for ever. And this year, as if in answer to them, a major European weekly published a special report last week revealing that the nuclear tests in the sixties were never as clean as they were made out to be, quite the contrary - the fact that civilians and soldiers had unwittingly been exposed to high radiation levels was concealed. Consequently, in the interests of transparency, this weekly publication is calling for the opening up of hitherto closed military archives. This is why, by taking up the question of nuclear disarmament, our Conference could also contribute to this major effort to achieve transparency by increasing its scope and content.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Palihakkara, to take the floor.

Mr. PALIHAKKARA (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, as I take the floor for the first time in plenary today, let me state at the outset how pleased we are to see you, a long-time CD stalwart and a friend, presiding over our proceedings. As you complete your term, Sweden's inaugural presidency under your competent leadership has already given us a solid institutional foundation, paving the way, we hope, for substantive progress in due course. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all those colleagues who have expressed words of welcome to me.

I am taking the floor today in my capacity as the Coordinator of the Group of 21 to make a very brief statement on behalf of my Group concerning the priority question on our agenda, namely agenda item 1.

The Group of 21 continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under agenda item 1. The Group is awaiting a reaction from other members of the Conference to the proposals that have been made in this regard.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Sri Lanka for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Majoor, to take the floor.

Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands): Mr. President, allow me first to express the gratitude of my delegation for the skilful way you have presided over the CD at this juncture, referred to by some delegations as the crossroads of

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relevance. You and your able team deserve our admiration for the persistence and patience with which you are seeking consensus among all member States on how to move the CD forward, both on its programme of work and on substance. I can assure you that my delegation will support you and your successors and will actively contribute in the search for the highest common denominator. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and his staff for their valuable support to the Conference.

Although relatively new myself, I would like to use this opportunity to welcome my new colleagues. Their fresh look on multilateral disarmament negotiations and the role of the Conference therein - in combination with the wisdom of my more experienced colleagues - will provide, I am sure, the right mix for early agreement on a substantive programme of work.

Today I would like to make a few observations on the past, the present and the future of the Conference on Disarmament, thereby focusing on substance rather than on procedure.

Looking back at its record over the last 30 years, the Conference has developed an impressive set of international legal instruments that addresses in a comprehensive manner the security challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction. I mention here the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968, extended indefinitely in 1995, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty of 1996. These treaties now live their own life through the mechanisms which they have created in one form or the other. Although these treaties deal with all existing kinds of weapons of mass destruction and are in that sense comprehensive, we know all too well that our work is far from completed. The CD and its member States have to do better.

First of all, these conventions have to be signed and ratified by all. The same goes for the bilateral agreements in this area. Non-ratification of any of these instruments by any State has wider implications than only its effect on the feasibility of one particular treaty. It undermines the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the agreed disarmament measures and the credibility of disarmament negotiations, in this Conference and in any other multilateral or bilateral framework.

Secondly, we have to improve and expand those instruments where appropriate. The negotiations on a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention are a case in point. We have to redouble our efforts to move these negotiations forward. Under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Tóth, the Netherlands is committed to reaching early agreement on an effective and credible legally binding instrument, with a set of compliance measures ranging from declarations to non-challenge visits and challenge inspections.

Thirdly, we have to add new instruments, where lacunae still exist or where the ultimate objective of ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction is not yet achieved. In the nuclear field, for example, much

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still remains to be done, notably - as an agreed further step to nuclear disarmament - the negotiation of a treaty on fissile material cut-off. I will come back to this issue later.

I would like to share with you now some of my first impressions as a newcomer to the Conference. I am very impressed by the outstanding quality of my colleagues and their staff, their knowledge of disarmament matters, their political skills and their creativity. At the same time, I am struck that this collective know-how and expertise is not put to its proper use. There is a certain hesitation to enter into real and substantive discussions and negotiations out of fear, it seems, of disrupting the good atmosphere. My delegation is equally interested in a good atmosphere but that should not prevent us from addressing the substance. The latter should not be overtaken by procedure and by tactics, a word I have heard in the framework of the CD more than in any other multilateral organization. My delegation, I am afraid, is bad in tactics and therefore has none. We simply want to start work, substantive work if possible.

As a warm-up we could, and still can, support your proposal, Mr. President, to reappoint three reform coordinators on the agenda, the expansion and the effective functioning of the Conference. We can also accept the establishment of ad hoc committees, or special coordinators if deemed necessary as a first step, for outer space, negative security assurances and transparency in armaments. We do not make any linkages between the three subjects or with any other subject, but it will not come as a surprise that my Government regards, out of those three, first and foremost transparency in armaments as a priority. My delegation can also agree to the reappointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines (APLs). After the signing of the Ottawa treaty, the situation with respect to anti-personnel landmines has changed. There now exists a treaty prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of APLs. A special coordinator should consult on how the Conference can effectively contribute to the universalization of the ban on anti-personnel landmines. It must be clear, however, that action in the Conference may not be in contradiction with, or undermine, the letter and spirit of the Ottawa treaty. That is to say that if the CD should negotiate a ban on transfers, as many have suggested, we do not oppose that as long as we are talking about a complete ban on transfers as embodied in the Ottawa treaty.

Let me now return in more detail to two subjects on which I touched earlier: nuclear disarmament and transparency in armaments, two issues to which my Government attaches great importance and on which it would like the Conference to make progress. Nuclear disarmament, because the new international security situation provides a unique opportunity for new and bold steps. The end of confrontation, its replacement by intensive and substantive cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally, as well as regionally and globally, should not only allow for such steps, but should in fact stimulate that. Transparency in armaments, because we are confronted on a daily basis with the tremendous suffering caused by conventional conflicts aggravated by the uncontrolled build-up of conventional weapons.

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As I stated earlier, it is my Government's view that we should start without delay negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile material on the basis of the agreed Shannon mandate. We recognize that a number of delegations have difficulties with some aspects of the mandate. This should, however, not stand in the way of the commencement of substantive work in an ad hoc committee. The discussions and negotiations will give ample opportunity for delegations to express themselves and to address their security concerns. It is impossible to predict, let alone prescribe, how the negotiations shall take place before they have even started. What we should have is the necessary level of trust, of confidence that all those concerns will be duly taken into consideration.

At the same time, we have to recognize that a cut-off treaty is not an end in itself. Other steps on the way to nuclear disarmament have to be taken in parallel, both in a bilateral and multilateral context and at the global international level. It is our hope that early ratification of the START II Treaty will pave the way for further reductions in a far-reaching START III. Also, the vast amount of tactical nuclear weapons should be addressed in order to improve transparency with respect to their precise numbers, and to reduce those substantially with the ultimate aim of eliminating them. Much work is being done in bilateral negotiations between the nuclear-weapon States, and we appreciate the progress that has been achieved in the last 10 to 15 years. The question now before the Conference is how it can contribute realistically to nuclear disarmament. As my Belgian colleague and many others after him have clearly stated, and I agree with them, the Conference is not in a position to negotiate nuclear arms reductions: this is first and foremost the responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States. The Conference would also be overplaying its hand if it believed it was able to press the United States, Russia and the other nuclear States into a time-bound framework. What we can do in the CD is to stimulate the nuclear disarmament process wherever we can. Cut-off is a case in point. Also, other subjects on our agenda have links to nuclear disarmament, such as negative security assurances, outer space and transparency. My delegation could also support, in an innovative approach, a framework that would allow member States of the CD to discuss regularly progress on nuclear disarmament and to exchange information, particularly on negotiations between nuclear-weapon States. We believe such a framework would serve us all: it would provide an opportunity for delegations to express their concerns, and it would contribute to transparency and confidence, two indispensable ingredients for any successful disarmament negotiation. We welcome, in this context, the spirit of the South African initiative, and also the Belgian proposals which have a clear potential to move the Conference forward on the issue of nuclear disarmament.

This brings me to my last point. My delegation is, rightfully, identified with the subject of transparency in armaments (TIA). We are proud of that, because we strongly believe that transparency remains one of the most important keys to peace and security at the lowest possible level of armament. Without transparency, no confidence; without confidence, no security. Transparency permeates and should permeate all arms control and disarmament negotiations. Transparency arrangements are a central part of the NPT, of the Chemical Weapons Convention, of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and of the

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negotiations on a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. Transparency is also the main objective of the United Nations Conventional Arms Register, to which so many of us provide on an annual basis data on the export and procurement of certain types of armaments.

These examples show that transparency is both a vertical and a horizontal issue. It should be, and is, addressed under the various arms control and disarmament treaties and arrangements. But at the same time, the issue should be addressed in a more comprehensive manner. The CD, with its specific expertise and experience in arms control and disarmament, is the pre-eminent body to stimulate further thinking on how to bring about, in a gradual but effective manner, the necessary level of transparency in armaments.

With respect to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the CD should be able to elaborate and pre-negotiate workable options for its expansion with other types of conventional weapons and with data on holdings and procurement through national production. Even with a helpful report of a Group of Governmental Experts, the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly does not lend itself to a detailed discussion, let alone a negotiation, on the specifics of such an expansion.

Apart from that, the CD remains the proper place to discuss and, where possible, elaborate other initiatives relating to conventional arms control, including confidence-building measures and arms export control mechanisms. The worldwide problem of the proliferation of small arms and arms of light calibre, particularly in areas of conflict, has increased the urgency for the CD to address these issues. In this context my delegation welcomes the proposals made by Canada in the plenary on 22 January 1998, and in particular the proposals aimed at promoting responsibility and restraint in international arms transfers; developing guidelines or a code of conduct on arms transfers, including small arms; and curbing illicit arms transfers.

Work on TIA should be resumed as soon as possible in an ad hoc committee with a broad mandate, allowing all delegations to voice their ideas and concerns on the issues. As a first step, the appointment of a special coordinator should be considered, as proposed by the G-21 for the 1997 programme of work, and reiterated recently by Ambassador Zahran of Egypt. For this purpose, my delegation has circulated a draft decision to appoint a special coordinator on TIA, and I hope that the Conference will take an early and positive decision on this proposal.

In closing, my delegation hopes that during this session we will address, in a substantive way, the various subjects that have been proposed by delegations for further work in the Conference, in ad hoc committees where possible, through special coordinators where necessary or, if required, by using any other agreeable framework or mechanism. Some of these subjects are priorities for my delegation, but I recognize and respect that other delegations have other priorities. We should, therefore, arrive sooner rather than later at an agreed menu of work reflecting the priorities of all.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa, to take the floor.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): I take the floor today to present officially, on behalf of 23 countries, the proposal for a draft decision on the reappointment of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. I introduced this proposal unofficially in an informal meeting last Thursday.

With reference to United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 H, and on the basis of last year's decision, the following countries propose the reappointment of the Special Coordinator to continue his consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6: Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela. This draft decision has been circulated as a Conference document (CD/1495).

I would like also to use this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your tireless efforts to guide the Conference towards decisions on concrete work. We appreciate the opportunity during the last few weeks of exchanging views on various agenda items in the informal consultations. These consultations have been conducted in a serious and constructive manner. We are convinced that we have made progress in substance.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Finland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of Poland, Ambassador Jakubowski, to take the floor.

Mr. JAKUBOWSKI (Poland): Mr. President, even though your term of office is running out, allow me first to congratulate you formally on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and on your commendable discharge of the responsibilities which that office entails. We are mindful of the contribution which Sweden, represented by illustrious Ministers for Disarmament, has made over the years to the multilateral disarmament negotiations in Geneva. Your efforts to launch the current session of the CD on a productive course are fully in line with that fine tradition.

We are confident that your efforts in regard to the CD agenda and work programme, which you have pursued with perseverance and skill, will soon pay off as we proceed to a substantive schedule of our work this year.

My greetings go also to the distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference, His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail.

I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome the distinguished representatives of China, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Peru, Sri Lanka, the

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United States and Viet Nam who have joined the Conference at this session. I look forward to close cooperation with them all. At the same time I am grateful for the words of welcome addressed to me.

I have asked for the floor in connection with the broad-ranging exchange of views on anti-personnel landmines (APLs), which we had last Thursday within the context of informal open-ended consultations on item 6 of our agenda.

Bearing in mind the important support which has emerged for the appointment of a special coordinator on APLs, on the one hand, and the misgivings and doubts voiced by some delegations, on the other, I should like to offer some comments on behalf of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Venezuela and, of course, Poland.

We assume that the overall, general task of the coordinator would be to try to explore and establish the views of Conference members on what the Conference on Disarmament may usefully do to promote the broader objective of a more effective prohibition of APLs. In the view of the delegations in whose name I am speaking, the pursuit of a global APL export ban in the CD would represent an important step in that direction. In our considered opinion, the reason is simple: such a ban would have the support and participation of the main producers of APLs. Such a ban would move the world one step further toward a lasting solution of the global landmine crisis.

As we certainly appreciate, a large portion of the APLs underlying the current humanitarian crisis were not manufactured in the countries in which they were placed. If we stop the flow of APLs between countries, we will significantly reduce the availability of APLs that cause the humanitarian problem. We are persuaded that CD negotiations centring on this aspect of the APL problem would close the gap in coverage between the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which only establishes controls on APL transfers, and the Ottawa Convention, which does not capture many of the key States in effectively reducing the flow of APLs between countries.

We therefore have no doubt that the CD needs to address APLs quickly. The simple reason is that casualties mount on a daily basis. As will be recalled, this was the key motivation behind efforts to begin negotiations in the CD last year as well as behind the Ottawa Convention. Then there is indisputable fact that the CD, unlike the CCW mechanism, can act now. There are no principled objections to the CCW route, but we are concerned about time lines. As the distinguished representative of France, Ambassador Bourgois, pointed out last Thursday, the more time which elapses before this issue is addressed, the more victims of APLs there will be.

To begin negotiations within the framework of the CCW Convention, a majority of the High Contracting Parties have to agree to a Conference to amend either the Convention itself or Protocol II before such a Conference can

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be convened. Given that the amended Protocol II has yet to enter into force, it is unlikely that a majority of States parties will, in the near future, agree to amend the Protocol.

Contrary to some views, a treaty negotiated in the CD does not have to take a significant amount of time. Although each treaty is unique in its own way, there is, in this case, a precedent on which negotiations could draw. However, we would not want to prejudge in any way the exact appearance of a final treaty before we have begun negotiations.

These, nevertheless, are all issues that, in our considered opinion, can be addressed by a special coordinator, and we urge this reappointment as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the next speaker, the representative of India, Ambassador Kunadi. You have the floor, Madam.

Mrs. KUNADI (India): Mr. President, may I begin by congratulating you formally on your assuming the presidency of the CD at the beginning of the annual session this year? I would also like to thank you and other colleagues for the warm words of welcome addressed to me. I would like to assure you and all fellow delegations as well as the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail, and the secretariat, of the earnest wish of my delegation to work together in our common endeavours. We note with appreciation the industry and fairness that you have brought to the job in trying to find solutions to the issues in order to lay the ground for us to move forward. You can be assured of the full cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to identify areas of consensus and to build upon them.

As I take the floor for the first time, I am conscious of the immense responsibility that rests on our shoulders as members of this Conference in realizing the expectations of the international community and in achieving the goals and objectives as set forth in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. India remains committed to achieving genuine nuclear disarmament in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner. We believe that a nuclear-weapon-free world will enhance our national security as it will for others, as well as global security. We find the doubts regarding the CD's role on negotiations relating to nuclear disarmament difficult to understand. We believe this issue remains settled by the Final Document of SSOD-I, which regards the CD as the sole multilateral negotiating forum of the international community for disarmament issues.

The elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has been the long-standing objective of the international community. India has been in the forefront of international efforts for the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction. India signed and ratified the BTWC in 1974 and has actively contributed to the ongoing efforts in the BTWC Ad Hoc Group

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to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. India was one of the original States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides for the complete elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction through a multilaterally negotiated non-discriminatory agreement embodying equal rights and obligations for all States parties. While we have made considerable headway towards disarmament in the field of chemical and biological weapons, the same cannot be said in the case of nuclear weapons.

The end of the cold war raised hopes and expectations that the nuclear-weapons States would take credible and meaningful steps for reducing and eliminating the threat posed by nuclear weapons to international peace and security. It is a matter of regret that despite some reductions, the hair-trigger nuclear confrontation inherited from the cold war period persists to this day. The refinement and upgrading of nuclear weapons is continuing. New types of nuclear weapons are being designed using non-explosive techniques. The search for new doctrines to justify their continued possession and use belies the expectation that the end of the cold war would also mean an end to the threat posed by nuclear weapons to international peace and security.

We believe that, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, the CD is the most appropriate forum for discussions and negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention which would ban the development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and ensure their destruction in a comprehensive manner. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 O embodies the desire of a large majority of the international community for the early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention. Chemical weapons and biological weapons have been dealt with through two comprehensive conventions which govern all aspects of these weapons. It will be only logical that a similar third convention should be negotiated for nuclear weapons. It is a matter of concern that the very success in the field of elimination of chemical and biological weapons should become the justification for the continued retention and possible use of nuclear weapons against the perceived threat of other weapons of mass destruction.

We have, along with other non-aligned and other developing countries, submitted a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons (CD/1419). There have been other proposals urging the early commencement of negotiations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The historic advisory opinion given by the International Court of Justice unanimously called for the urgent commencement and conclusion of such negotiations. Many distinguished voices in the nuclear-weapon States have highlighted the diminishing utility of nuclear weapons and the need to do away with them in order to prevent accidents, proliferation and the possibility of these weapons falling into the hands of non-State entities. Last year, we joined other delegations from non-aligned and other developing countries to present to the Conference a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament contained in document CD/1463. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 L calls upon the CD to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a

(Mrs. Kunadi, India)

time-bound framework through a nuclear weapons convention. This call should not be ignored and the CD must take substantive steps to respond to it.

India attaches the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. Our proposal for a time-bound phased programme is not an "all or nothing" or a "fixed timetable" approach, as characterized by some. Pending the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, we have proposed the immediate conclusion of an international agreement prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons as a step in our efforts directed towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/39 C calls for such negotiations in the CD.

We oppose non-action on genuine nuclear disarmament in the CD, and have our doubts about the utility of repetitive exercises. We would like the ride to our common destination of a nuclear-weapon-free world to be smooth, with road maps, signposts and time-frames, on which all of us can agree. We are looking at the South African proposal contained in CD/1483 to see whether we can work on it with a view to moving our work forward on agenda item 1 by providing a common meeting ground without prejudging the differing approaches.

We had expressed reservations on the tenuous nature of the compromise on fissile material cut-off (FMCT) when we participated in the consensus reflected in the Shannon report, which was reached in 1995, just before the NPT Extension and Review Conference. Subsequent developments and recent statements by a number of delegations indicate that these reservations are widely shared. United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 L recognizes FMCT as an integral step leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Last year, proposals that were put forward and considered in tne CD did not command consensus. A proposal has been tabled this year in working paper CD/1485 which suggests the value of reconsidering the context in which the mandate contained in the Shannon report was put forward. There is a greater acknowledgement that it is necessary to develop a new consensus. We remain ready to participate in consultations on the subject, taking into account all proposals that have been put forward.

We are also ready to commence work on other issues. India remains committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel landmines. We believe that the objective can be achieved in a meaningful way through a phased approach that would enjoy international consensus, and by addressing humanitarian concerns and legitimate defence requirements of States. We could start with a ban on transfers. This is motivated by the knowledge that the landmines which are causing devastation to civilian populations around the world today are not produced in the areas where the devastation is taking place, but have been transferred there. The present export moratoria would then be made universal. We could follow other steps and gradually narrow the field, as it were, to a situation in which landmines are used only for the defence of borders, a situation which could finally be dealt with as appropriate military solutions are found. The basis of this phased approach would be seen as confidence-building, enabling States to deal urgently with the humanitarian crisis, while remaining sensitive to

(Mrs. Kunadi, India)

their legitimate security needs. The international community should also effectively address the criticial issue of mine clearance and dedicate greater efforts and assistance to affected areas.

Deliberations in the CD have revealed that we are close to reaching consensus in some areas, PAROS and NSAs in particular. Space offers immense opportunities which could be utilized for the socio-economic development of mankind. There are a number of areas which need to be addressed urgently: a ban on ASAT weapons, rules-of-the-road arrangements, among other issues. We believe that it is essential to strive towards an international regime which ensures that space is used only for peaceful purposes. In previous years, the Ad Hoc Committee had developed a relevant and useful data bank. We are encouraged to note that resolution 52/37 on this subject in the last session of the United Nations General Assembly was not opposed by any delegation. We would like to see early establishment of an ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate on this issue. We welcome the proposal made by Canada contained in CD/1487 on a possible mandate for an ad hoc committee, and see it as a step in the direction of peaceful use of outer space. Should our deliberations this year indicate consensus to commence work on NSA, we are ready to do so.

In other areas where consensus remains elusive, we may intensify consultations with a view to reaching consensus. However, I wish to reiterate once more our position on agenda item 1: nuclear disarmament remains our primary objective and our priority. For the very existence of nuclear weapons threatens international security, and their continued possession in the hands of a few countries creates an inherently discriminatory, unjust and unstable situation. We do hope that this Conference will be able to respond to the expectations that the international community has of it.

My delegation will extend to you, Mr. President, its fullest cooperation in your efforts to enlarge the areas of consensus so that we can move forward towards our common goals.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of the United States, Mr. Grey, to take the floor.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): I have asked for the floor today to address the current situation in the CD. In this regard, it is more in sorrow than in anger that I state the obvious. Our shared hope that the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament would avoid the errors of 1997 is dwindling rapidly away in spite of your efforts. Many of us came to this CD session anxious to end the paralysis of 1997 and ready to offer some flexibility. And in fact, the United States has demonstrated its flexibility by accepting CD work, in the spirit of compromise, on issues that are not priority items for us. We are prepared to continue to be flexible, but it is only fair to ask that our flexibility be reciprocated.

Multilateral diplomacy, like politics, is the art of the possible. There are a number of topics on the 1998 CD agenda whose possibilities could

(Mr. Grey, United States)

become realities in this unique multilateral forum. To this end, the United States joined the consensus in approving the CD's 1998 agenda, and we are prepared to discuss any item on that agenda, including item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". Negotiations to ban the export of anti-personnel landmines, negotiations to ban the production of fissile material, further progress on conventional weapons and on transparency in armaments, and re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances are other CD topics that are not merely possible but indeed in our view ripe for immediate multilateral work. Agreement to work on these topics would reinvigorate the CD, end the deadlock, and demonstrate to the world community that the best days of multilateral diplomacy are yet to come.

Our fellow CD members who call for an ad hoc committee to negotiate nuclear disarmament should remember that we almost began negotiations on a key element of the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", consistent with the need to continue to move with determination towards the full realization and effective implementation of the provisions of the non-proliferation treaty. That was in 1995, when the Ad Hoc Committee on a "ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices" was established in the CD, only to be blocked from ever meeting or even having its chairman appointed. Had those negotiations begun in 1995, they might now be nearing completion and we could be looking to the future. Those who call most loudly for nuclear disarmament cannot simultaneously refuse to take steps on FMCT. By doing so, they call into question their motives and their objectives on both issues. I cannot believe that this is their intent. It certainly is not ours.

We have been called "laconic" in the expression of our view that the CD is not the appropriate forum for negotiations to reduce the stockpile of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. But laconic seems an inappropriate word. For more years than the CD has existed in its present form, the United States has been engaged in negotiations on controlling, reducing, and eliminating nuclear weapons. To enhance our understanding of this point, I have made available to the members of the Conference a 95-page booklet, complete with a glossary of technical terms, that describes the United States' commitment to arms control and disarmament and the many achievements in this area. The photograph on the cover depicts United States Air Force B-52 heavy bombers cut into pieces and displayed openly in the State of Arizona. The United States record on nuclear disarmament, as eloquently displayed in this one picture, is worth a thousand words.

Throughout 1997, all substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament was stymied and held hostage to nuclear disarmament linkage. Our continued inability to function effectively as a multilateral forum brings to mind the cri de coeur of the late baseball manager Casey Stengel, who, on observing the dismal performance of his 1960s-era New York Mets baseball team, was heard to exclaim "Don't nobody know how to play this game?". I, too, must ask if we are capable of working as a team to accomplish realistic goals.

(Mr. Grey, United States)

It is still early in the 1998 session, but the CD's current performance does not compare favourably with its past successes. The CD can still have a productive year if we want it badly enough. I did not come here simply to warm a seat and I know that I am not alone in that sentiment.

The key to moving forward is consensus on the basis of widely consulted proposals. That is the way the CD has worked in the past, and it continues to be the best way forward. For its part, the United States is prepared to work with every member of this body in an effort to find a way forward that we all can live with. It strains credulity to suggest that the United State does not foresee a role for the CD on the question of nuclear disarmament. The completion of the CTBT, and our continuing efforts to begin FMCT negotiations in this Conference, bear unequivocal testimony to the CD's vital role. We are always prepared to listen, to participate, to contribute, and to discuss issues of concern to all.

I appeal to all CD members, new and old, to cross group boundaries and to join in immediate negotiations to ban the export of anti-personnel landmines and to end the production of fissile material. If we continue to stall on these important global security issues, the CD may lose the confidence of the international community.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States, Mr. Grey, for his statement. Distinguished delegates, this concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I recognize the Ambassador of Pakistan.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): It was not the intention of my delegation to ask for the floor today, since it was our view that the CD was making reasonably good progress, having adopted its agenda, even in the absence of a formal statement from the delegation of Pakistan.

Unfortunately, the developments of the past few days indicate that our Conference may yet again revert to the situation that we faced last year and be unable to undertake substantive work on any of the agenda items that have been put forward. My delegation shares the sentiment, although perhaps not the substance, of the statement which has just been made by the distinguished Ambassador of the United States. And we, too, would wish to see whether our Conference could not, even in these circumstances that prevail, find a way to reach consensus on some issues so that we can commence work while we continue to debate the issues on which consensus cannot be reached at the present time. We have heard today about tactics and strategy, and one thing that perhaps we ought to guard against is to follow the axiom which we hear in the negotiations on APL, which was "Ban yours, not mine", and this is a tactic which obviously will not allow the emergence of consensus on all the items.

My delegation feels that it is fairly obvious that there are some issues on which consensus can be reached, at least on a limited basis, and we should capture that consensus as soon as possible. Among these, we believe, consensus can be reached on the reappointment of the four Special Coordinators which the CD had agreed to establish last year. My delegation's view is that

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

even those countries which are not in favour of negotiations on anti-personnel landmines in the CD would have the opportunity to express their views to the Special Coordinator in the course of his work and thereafter, to see whether consensus can be reached on a possible mandate for negotiations.

Secondly, as you have yourself noted, Mr. President, and others have noted, we are close to agreement on the appointment of a special coordinator on outer space. My delegation is willing to be flexible on the mandate and the language of the mandate which is to be given to the special coordinator on outer space. I believe we can reach that decision very soon.

Thirdly, we thought we had a consensus on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances. However, at the last set of informal consultations, we were disabused by the position of one member State. We therefore feel that consultations ought to continue on the issue of the creation of an ad hoc committee on NSA in order to overcame the new difficulties that have arisen.

At the same time, I think it needs no elaboration to say that my delegation attaches the highest importance to the item on nuclear disarmament. The Coordinator of the Group of 21 has stated that the Group awaits a response to the various proposals that have been made on nuclear disarmament, especially by the Group of 21 and members of the Group of 21. But we understand that a consensus on the modalities for negotiations or deliberations on this item may be elusive at the present moment. We would therefore urge you, Mr. President, and your successor to continue the process of informal consultations and to see whether agreement could be reached on some version of the proposals which are on the table at the present moment, including the proposals of the Group of 21. This is a process which could take a few weeks, but we should address this proposal with the patience that is required due to the importance of the item. But we must not allow our frustration with the inability to reach agreement on this item to prevent us from achieving consensus on the other issues where consensus appears, at least to my delegation, to be possible at the present moment. That would be the course we would urge, and we would then be able to say to our colleague from the United States that we do not know to play this game.

Mr. SELEBI (South Africa): I addressed this Conference on 20 January at its opening plenary meeting for the 1998 session. At that time South Africa made a proposal to the Conference on Disarmament for a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. In my statement I also addressed the issue of negative security assurances clarifying my Government's views on, and approach to, this issue. In my statement today, I again wish to take up the proposal which we have made on nuclear disarmament, address the issue of negative security assurances (NSAs) in the light of recent developments in the informal consultations held under your auspices, Mr. President, and I wish to raise the anti-personnel mines (APM) issue.

On negative security assurances, I expressed some of my delegation's concerns when addressing the Conference on 20 January. In short: the CD has, in the past, shown a singular lack of any progress when dealing with this

(Mr. Selebi, South Africa)

issue; we question whether negative security assurances are a genuine disarmament measure belonging in this body and whether they should not, in fact, be viewed as a confirmation of the nuclear-weapon status of those States which possess these weapons; and we question whether the CD is in fact the correct forum to deal with this issue.

Notwithstanding our understanding that a consensus does not now exist on the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee on NSAs, it is in the context of our previous statements, and in view of the developments in the CD on this issue, as well as after consultation with Pretoria, that I wish to raise certain questions which will assist us in formulating our reaction to the developments here.

The following questions which I pose are asked in reference to the CD mandate which has been the basis of the work on the NSA issue in the Conference: "the Conference on Disarmament decides to re-establish, for the duration of its 1992 session, an ad hoc committee to continue to negotiate with a view to reaching agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". What is the purpose of establishing an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances? Is it the intention of all of the States which have agreed to its establishment (including those nuclear-weapon States who have so clearly demonstrated their desire for an ad hoc committee) that the result should be a negotiated, internationally legally binding instrument on NSAs? Should the agreement, both stated and unstated, which has been demonstrated by the nuclear-weapon States for the establishment of an ad hoc committee, be interpreted as an indication that they have revised their previous positions on the granting of NSAs. In other words, by indicating their agreement to the establishment of an NSA ad hoc committee, do the supporting CD members undertake that we will be doing serious and focused work on the negotiation of NSAs, or is the intention that this body will only serve to repeat the Conference's previous experience?

Now turning to the anti-personnel mines issue, I also wish to pose a series of questions which will help us clarify our position. These are questions which I have posed previously but which (with the exception of some remarks by the distinguished Ambassador of France) have remained unanswered.

As was said by the distinguished Ambassador of China in the informal consultations on Tuesday, although in a different context, my delegation would like to know what the ultimate intention is of the proposals that have been made. I know that some of the delegations here may not be in a position to answer these questions, but I believe that those who have been its strongest advocates should be in a position to provide us with their vision. In addition to the remarks made by Poland today, we would seek to know: what is the intended scope of any agreement on anti-personnel mines negotiated in the CD? To which anti-personnel mines is it intended that such an agreement would apply? Would it be to the APM as defined in the Ottawa treaty or to that in the CCW? Given the fact that the APM Protocol to the CCW is expected to enter into force this year, once a further five instruments of ratification have been deposited (including, it is our hope, that of South Africa), does the CCW

(Mr. Selebi, South Africa)

forum not provide us with a better alternative? Is there a need for a third international instrument, when the CCW's APM Protocol could, with little amendment, meet the apparent objectives of those advocates of the APM issue in the CD? It is argued that the CD is the most appropriate venue for further work on the APM issue because the primary producers and users of APM, who have been unable to sign the Ottawa treaty, are represented here. But is this also not the case in the CCW where, as I have demonstrated, it could be hoped that negotiations on the issue would be far simpler? Are there any assurances that, as has been stated by the proponents of APM in the CD, all of the States which have been unable to support the Ottawa treaty will be netted through the process here? Or is it the case that, as with other treaties negotiated in the CD, all of its members will not agree to be bound by the fruits of their negotiations?

On the proposal for a decision for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, the text of which has been circulated by the secretariat as document CD/1483 dated 20 January 1998, I would firstly like to extend my Government's appreciation to those delegations who have welcomed, and indicated their support for, the proposal.

We are aware that the motivation of South Africa in making the nuclear disarmament proposal has been questioned. South Africa's motivation on this issue is clear and is demonstrated by the fact that we are the only country which has unilaterally destroyed its own arsenal of nuclear weapons. Rather than seeking to sow confusion by chasing motivational ghosts, members of the Conference on Disarmament should recognize that the Conference is at a crossroads of relevance where we should seek to tackle the real issues which face us and address these in a realistic and achievable manner.

The question which, however, faces this Conference now is how to go forward on the nuclear disarmament issue. In my statement three weeks ago on 20 January, I stated that it was South Africa's intention to push forward with this decision in a plenary meeting of the CD in the near future; and the near future is soon.

Of late, my delegation has been approached on the timing of bringing this proposal to the plenary for decision by the members of the Conference on Disarmament. Some have wondered whether more time is necessary and whether the opportunity should be given to allow CD members to engage the issue, possibly under your auspices, Mr. President. We have already had three weeks. The informal consultations which you did convene on the nuclear disarmament issue did not appear to us to be close to delivering any conclusive results. We must therefore at this juncture ask if there is anything to gain by allowing further time. Is there a possibility that we will be able to resolve the nuclear disarmament issue in a way which satisfies all the members of the CD? Will the answer be any different from now? If not, is it not better to confront these problems head on, early in the Conference's session, so that we can honestly and openly debate them in the appropriate forums?

I would, however, continue to emphasize that we should not allow this issue, which we are all fully aware lies at the heart of the fundamental

(Mr. Selebi, South Africa)

problems facing the Conference today, to be submerged in the morass of CD procedural tactics or inaction. The CD will not be able to fulfil the international community's expectations - especially as we approach the start of the next millennium, when we all hope for a more secure future than we and our predecessors have faced - by avoiding this issue.

Mr. President, I have raised all of the above-mentioned issues, and I am aware that many of the points I have made are formulated as questions. However, this is done in an endeavour to constructively assist you and my own Government in finding solutions to the debates which we have had here in recent weeks.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, thank you for calling upon me on this penultimate day of your presidency. I hope that this statement, which was not scheduled, will not make your last day more complicated but rather will allow you to close on a note of humour. You know me well and you knew I could not resist the temptation to answer my friend the Ambassador of South Africa, the representative of a country for which France and myself have the utmost respect. I feel the need not to reply to him in full, because the answer would call for detail and some length, but I nevertheless feel the need to answer him, because I think he has put sincere, honest questions to us which we should address to ourselves. So, on a few points, and in a partial and incomplete form, I should like to offer France's replies to some of these questions, which I will take up in the order in which he himself raised them.

Concerning the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on security assurances, I understand that past experience is not encouraging. I understand his argument less well when he explains on the one hand that the negotiation of a multilateral and legally binding instrument in the Conference on Disarmament would simply reinforce the prerogatives of the nuclear States, whereas on the other hand he proposes the negotiation of such a multilateral and legally binding instrument under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Whether in Geneva or New York, either this Treaty is deemed useful for the security of the international community, or it is considered pointless because it strengthens the so-called prerogatives of the nuclear States. But there cannot be two different answers to that question according to the body involved. It is either yes or no, and if it is no in Geneva, then it is no in New York, and if it is yes in Geneva it is yes in New York. So here there is a point which I don't understand.

Why re-establish an ad hoc committee which my country - quite without enthusiasm, I hasten to add - is ready to accept now? Ambassador Selebi raises a series of very pertinent questions, but he must see that we cannot answer these questions as long as we have not begun to talk, we cannot run down our negotiating positions by saying in advance what we are going to do, otherwise there would no longer be any need for negotiations. So here too - you may put it down to a perversion of Cartesian logic, but I think that if it is justified to raise questions, we are also justified in not supplying an immediate and categorical answer. However, unlike him, I think nonetheless that there would be merit in having talks on this subject in such a committee

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

for at least two reasons. The first is that since the period when the Conference started talks in this area, the times have greatly changed. The commitments entered into in the framework of positive or negative security assurances have proliferated, becoming both numerous and not always harmonized. We are truly entering a new era of international relations from that standpoint, and in France we feel that we have to take a look at the past in order to see things clearly and see how, in the future, we should embark on reflection based on what has already been achieved and what might still be necessary. Of course this involves reflection in the first place, but reflection, as the Ambassador of Algeria said earlier in his outstanding statement, is an integral part of negotiation.

I will also give him another answer: the Conference on Disarmament has the advantage, although it is not universal, that it represents all the major schools of thought in the international community and includes States which, for reasons of their own, have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - hence the value, for a country such as my own which believes in dialogue, of not excluding them a priori from a new exercise of reflection on the topic of security assurances. Ambassador Selebi was the architect of negotiations in Oslo on this issue that gave rise to the Ottawa Convention. We were on the same side at all times in that area, but I differ from the conclusions that he reaches. Why not try to take a small step forward here? Why deny to States - and some of them have spoken today - which were not able or did not wish to sign in Ottawa and are not going to do so in the near future, why refuse to reach out to those States in a spirit of dialogue and build on the greater awareness they have acquired of the humanitarian problems caused by mines, thanks to that very Ottawa Process? Who would be the losers? Not the Ottawa signatories, nor the peoples threatened by mines, nor these States themselves.

Now, of course, there is the idea of making use of the previous framework, even though the Ottawa Process had ruled it out - that of the 1980 Convention and its Amended Protocol II. We could of course consider this solution. For my part - and this is what surprises me, that starting from the same premises, Ambassador Selebi and I should arrive at contrary conclusions - I think the framework of the Conference on Disarmament is much to be preferred. Firstly because of the continued urgency in this field, which argues in favour of dealing with this subject here and now, without waiting for a rather long legal and political process to end before it can be taken up again in the bodies relating to the 1980 Convention. Secondly, if the Ottawa Process came into being it was because the negotiations on Protocol II had disappointed many States, including my own, and the cause of this disappointment lay, among other things, in definitions that some had found rather too subtle. If we find ourselves negotiating again within the 1980 Convention framework, the point of departure will be those definitions, whereas it would be far better - and this we could do here - to start from the simpler definitions appearing in the Ottawa Convention, which would really make it possible to achieve progress on anti-personnel mines without exception - when I say without exception, this would of course cover only transfers or exports - but anti-personnel mines of whatever type, however technologically sophisticated or unsophisticated.

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

These are the two reasons for which I think he should give his consent to the appointment of a special coordinator, because that corresponds fundamentally to the position of his country and because after all whatever doubts he may have about the merits of the CD in this sphere, he can express them to the special coordinator. Thus this is not a huge commitment, it is simply a commitment to dialogue.

You will not be surprised if I do not prolong this meeting for too long, because I would certainly be strongly criticized by Ambassador Lars Norberg, notwithstanding his notable patience and his well-known sense of diplomacy, by taking up nuclear matters; and in any case, you are familiar with France's position. But it is true that this is a complex matter and that, as the Ambassador of Pakistan said, we will need to try and rub our ideas on these issues against each other for many meetings yet. Well, yes, I think that South Africa has made a quite remarkable proposal, which stands as a sort of bridge between rather conflicting approaches, and I congratulate South Africa on this proposal. Nevertheless, my country is not going to accept this proposal, at least not now. Why? Because it is premature. It is premature because first of all we must endeavour to negotiate the convention to ban fissile material. That is the real work to be done for the moment, that was the first step that was identified, and that is what we have to deal with first. Of course we will be told: if this body to which such emotional, not to say religious significance is attached - the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament - were to be established today, could we not at the same time start the negotiations on cut-off? Well, no, as you are well aware. That would simply isolate certain States, and France does not like isolating States, even in its own interest. So, I think that in fact we need time, we need a little patience and I think we also have to express gratitude to Ambassador Selebi for the patience he has shown today in making this statement and putting before us these honest questions to which I have tried to provide a preliminary answer, honestly and in good faith.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Today has been a particularly interesting meeting. We have heard new proposals that we shall study closely and we have heard repeated appeals, which gain weight as time goes by, that we should not repeat last year's deplorable performance but should break the stalemate. Last week you and I had a meeting, Mr. President, which I left feeling very optimistic about the possibility of arriving at a programme of work. I realize that I made a mistake frequently committed by economists. Economists are sure that optimists are merely pessimists who are ill-informed, and I think I was indeed ill-informed.

There are still differences that separate us on all the agenda items. Of course I share many of the points of view put forward today, but there is one of particular concern to me. I am concerned that systematically, and in every meeting we hold, the universal scope of the Ottawa Convention is called into question. This is a Convention that my country and myself regard as important and consider very useful. Today comments have been made about another convention to which my country attaches importance, that is the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons, and that also gives me cause for concern. There seem to be views on this matter that my country does not

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

share. When we negotiated that convention in the second half of the 1970s, one of the most difficult problems we had was to include a mechanism for follow-up action. We managed it. It is hard to read, it is hard to understand and hard to explain perhaps, but it does have a follow-up mechanism for a convention which, in the final analysis, was legally innovative and provides an umbrella to which can be added a variety of protocols on a variety of weapons or a variety of topics. This follow-up mechanism provided for a conference that would be held a certain number of years after entry into force, one that was held as a result of a French initiative, and it did take place. That review conference adopted a revised and amended protocol to Protocol II, and adopted Protocol IV, and in accordance with the review mechanism, it was decided that there would be other subsequent conferences, and the next is scheduled for the year 2000.

It is a serious error to believe that only by amending the amended Protocol II, or only by amending the Protocol on mines, it would be possible to place a ban on the transfer of mines within 18 months, at the conference in the year 2000. To do that, all that would be required is to have a Protocol V. It would have nothing to do either with the original Protocol II or with the amended Protocol II that we drew up at the last conference. If there is general agreement concerning a total ban on the transfer of anti-personnel mines, in the widest possible sense of the term, let those of us that are parties to the 1980 Convention step outside and we can draft it very easily in a day, and we can adopt it at the review conference that is scheduled in the year 2000. It would take us a lot less time than going through the Conference on Disarmament. The problem is this rather confused idea of what can be done in other bodies, and of priorities. I agree, there is a pressing need for the Ottawa Convention to enter into force, there is a pressing need for it to become universal, as a result of accession by all States, and perhaps a few practical steps could be taken in this Conference so as to achieve those two objectives, and perhaps it might be appropriate to establish or appoint a special coordinator for the purpose. I would have no difficulty. But there is an argument that escapes me, and it is the argument that we have to have a new treaty because there is one in existence that is not going to be ratified in the foreseeable future by one or two States. If this argument were to prove acceptable, the first thing we would have to do is restart negotiations on the CTBT and the NPT. No, treaties are supposed to be universal, a status they attain step by step, and universality would not be served by efforts to re-negotiate them.

Mr. SELEBI (South Africa): All I want to do is thank the distinguished Ambassador of France for attempting to answer the questions that I had posed. I must say though, with all humility, that I am not wiser after that intervention. A premature child is a child. It is not a gorilla. It is a child. I do hope that maybe people have not had time to formulate answers to these questions. I have the patience to wait for much clearer answers that can help me to be wiser than before I posed the question.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of South Africa, Ambassador Selebi. If there are no more requests for the floor, as my term of office is coming to an end, I should like to make some concluding remarks.

(The President)

It was an encouraging start for this year's session when the Conference adopted its agenda for 1998 at its first plenary meeting on 20 January.

Since then we have completed a first round of informal open-ended consultations on a number of issues of particular interest.

Agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", is in my opinion a pivotal issue. In our consultations two subjects have dominated the discussions under this item: nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty. These discussions have not so far yielded conclusive results. My conclusion, after this first round of consultations, is therefore that further consultations are needed in order to bring about a convergence of views on the issues to be addressed under this item and the organizational framework in which they might be considered.

On some other items on our agenda our consultations have produced considerable convergence of views.

On agenda item 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", there seems to be agreement in principle to appoint a special coordinator. However, we have not yet been able to finalize the specific mandate for such a special coordinator.

On agenda item 4, "Negative security assurances", there is a large measure of agreement to re-establish the ad hoc committee on that item.

With respect to agenda item 6, "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", there is a strong trend in favour of appointing a special coordinator on the question of anti-personnel landmines. It seems to me that we are pretty close to an agreement on this matter.

And finally, on item 7, "Transparency in armaments", there was also a wide measure of support to appoint a special coordinator to conduct consultations on the most appropriate way to deal with this question.

On all these items - that is, 3, 4, 6 and 7 - further consultations are also needed in order to establish a basis for formal decisions.

Although it is obvious that much work remains to be done, it has been encouraging for me to see the flexibility and cooperation shown by delegations so far. In my opinion, there is a new and positive atmosphere in the Conference this year, which is best demonstrated by the fact that the Conference has already been able to cover important ground and prepare for decisions on substantive work.

I should therefore like to express to all delegations my sincere gratitude for the cooperation and support you have extended to me throughout my presidency.

In particular, I should like to thank the Group Coordinators, Ambassadors Selebi and Palihakkara of the Group of 21, Ambassador Maimeskul of

(The President)

the Eastern European Group, Ambassador Hofer of the Western Group and Ambassador Li Changhe of China, as well as Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Mr. Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the CD, and the entire secretariat.

It only remains for me to wish my successor in this post, Ambassador Erwin Hofer of Switzerland, every success during his term of office.

This concludes our business for today, and the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 19 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.